

**MAINTAINING LIFE'S VARIOUS STEWARDSHIPS**

**Ron Christian, Compiler**

**“Growing A Godly Life” - Devotional Series  
Book 9 - “Stewardship”**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**As compiler of this series, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Shirley J Ruiz, who dedicated her great skills, abounding energy, and many hours of her time in typing the entire manuscripts of this devotional series. I feel certain that her committed hands will bring great blessing to many persons.**



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**INTRODUCTION**

**By  
Ron Christian**

**A minister once wrote to a wealthy and influential businessman requesting a subscription to a worthy charity. He promptly received a curt refusal, which closed with these words: ‘As far as I can see, this Christian business is just one continuous give, give, give.’**

**“After a brief interval, the pastor wrote him: ‘I wish to thank you for the best definition of the Christian life I have yet heard.’**

**“Real living is always ‘one continuous give, give, give.’ That was the secret the first Christians discovered. They gave their money, their witness, even their lives, and were gloriously happy in doing it.**

**“The secret of happiness is no secret. We have all heard it all our lives. It is unselfishness. But only when we learn to put it into practice do we begin to live. The more freely we give, the more radiantly we live.” (Walter Moore; quoted in ‘Shoeleather Faith: No. 224)**

**Everything we have belongs to God alone.**

**We belong to God because God created us. We belonged to God even before we were born, when we were still a thought in God’s Mind. We belonged to God when we were in our mother’s womb, being formed and shaped by God. Writes the Psalmist, “*You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because you are to be feared; all you do is strange and wonderful. I know it with all my heart. When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother’s womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there - you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began.*” (Psalm 139: 13-16, Today’s English Version)**

**We belong to God because God redeemed us with His Son’s blood. God has redeemed us from the bondage of sin. He has accomplished this through the ransom price of Christ’s blood. I Corinthians 6: 19b says, “*You do not belong to yourselves, but to God, he bought you for a price.*” The price God paid was costly - the blood of Jesus. You belong to God alone, for He has bought you from the slavery of sin.**

**By right of creation, and by right of redemption, Christ owns you. Everything you have (time, talents, possessions, relationships) and everything you are (personality, influence, living soul) belong to the Lord God.**

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**To claim to possess anything as your inherent right is to deny the ownership of God and is to reject the Lordship of Christ!**

**God has given you time, gifts, money, and many other things. These are given to you to use for your Master, and to willingly return to your Rightful Owner - the Lord God Almighty.**

**Yes, the very essence of Christianity is one continuous ‘Give! Give! Give!’ You are to surrender everything to the Lord of Lords, who is the Creator of life and the Redeemer of Mankind!**

### **I. “GIVE! GIVE! GIVE! YOUR TIME”**

**A. Time is God-given. Time is not the property of man to squander or to trifle with. To kill time, is to misuse the gift of God.**

**B. Time is very limited and brief. *“A man’s days resemble grass. He blossoms like a flower in the fields; the wind blows over it, and it is gone, with not a sign that it has ever been there.”* (Psalm 103: 15-16) Because life is so brief, a Christian must be very selective in the choice of his activities.**

**C. Time is divided among a multitude of activities in everyday living. Have you ever tried to analyze how much time is spent in different activities during an average person’s life? ‘The Ladies’ Home Journal’ has given us such an analysis.**

**6 years spent in eating  
11 years in working (about 100,000 hours)  
5 ½ years in washing and dressing  
3 years in education  
8 years in amusement  
6 years in walking  
3 years in reading  
3 years in conversation  
24 years in sleeping  
and just 6 months in worshipping God.**

**D. Time is subject for accountability at the end of life.**

**“I have only just a minute  
Just sixty seconds in it;  
Forced upon me - can’t refuse it,**

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**Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,  
I must suffer if I lose it,  
Give account if I abuse it;  
Just a tiny little minute,  
But eternity is in it.” (Author Unknown)**

- E. Time must be given back to its Giver - the Lord God - and the best way to accomplish this goal is to expend time in God's service.**

**Someone once said, “We should live each day as if it were a life time.” Accomplish the same kind of tasks each day that are worthy of being accomplished in a life time. (Ephesians 5: 15-16)**

**“Only one life,  
T'will soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ  
Will last.”**

**How tragic it is that too many times we as Christians have not made the best use of the present opportunities. The following poem always stirs my heart,**

**“The days go by, the weeks how fast,  
And all at once the year is past!  
And oh, how much we meant to do  
Before another year was through -  
That Bible class we meant to teach,  
The boys and girls we planned to reach.  
But some of them have slipped away  
And we never found the time to say  
A word for Christ; ah! Had we known,  
How eager then our hearts had grown!  
And some whose hearts were warm to hear  
The name of Him we love so dear,  
Have since grown cold and hard in sin,  
And now they will not ask Him in,  
For Satan found them prey indeed  
Because we failed to sow the seed.  
God's time is now, this day, this hour,  
To rescue souls from Satan's power.  
Our most sincere repentant sigh  
Will not recall the years gone by,  
Oh, there are boys and girls today  
Who wait for you to point the way.**

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**So forget the things that lie behind  
And press ahead, with yielded mind  
And heart and hands and feet and eyes,  
To reach God’s goal, to gain His prize.**

**- Barbara Cornet Ryberg -**

### **II. “GIVE! GIVE! GIVE! YOUR TALENTS”**

**Not only are we to give our time to God, but we are to give our talents to God. Why? Because God gave to us our talents, and we are therefore to return them to the rightful Owner. How can we return our talents to the rightful Owner? By simply using our talents for God and for His Church.**

**Each person is given talents at birth. The abilities which each possesses vary greatly from person to person, but God is the Giver of them all. God has given some great intellectual abilities. To others, God has given talents which involve the skillful use of the hands.**

**Each Christian has been given one or more spiritual gifts at the time of conversion. God is the giver of all good gifts. Therefore, none has any reason for boasting. To deflate the proud in Corinth who were boasting over their gifts, Paul asked, “*What have you that was not given to you? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*” (1 Corinthians 4: 7) Every gift is needed in the church. Every person is important! The church is only strong to the degree that individuals are exercising their spiritual gifts for the purpose of edifying each other. God has given spiritual gifts to each believer in the church, as a means of glorifying God and expressing mutual love for one another.**

**Do you remember Jesus’ parable of the talents? (Luke 12) Jesus’ parable of the talents teaches us that all had equal opportunities, although each had different numbers of talents. Each was expected to develop according to the individual given capacities. Both the two and five talented stewards received equal praise for their double development. It is not what we have or how much we have that is important, but rather what we do with what we have. Jesus said, “*For unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*” (Luke 12: 28) This implies that to whom little is given, little will be required. Therefore, the one talented man was not at a disadvantage.**

**In this parable, Jesus speaks of two different kinds of men. The first type is illustrated by the one-talented steward. He is over-cautious, unenterprising and fearful. This man represents the one who is unwilling or fearful to use his God-given talents. He is undaring, uninvolved, self-protective, selfishly introverted, socially indifferent, and preoccupied with selfish interests.**

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**What is God’s judgment on the unenterprising, overly-cautious, self-protective person? Listen to the words of God’s pronouncement. *“So take the talent away from him and give it to the one with the ten talents.”* Matthew adds this interpretations to the account: *“For to everyone who has, shall be given and he will have more than plenty: but from him who is wanting shall be taken what he has.”* (Matthew 25: 28-30)**

**The second type of person which Jesus speaks about is the daring, enterprising person who uses his God-given talents to further God’s purposes. He is the cooperative, constructive person who effectively functions as a part of the whole. He does not assert his own rights, but forms a small, but significant, link in the chain of love and service. He does not feel self-sufficient or completely indispensable, but is willing to step down, if some other brother can more effectively fill his place. He finds a place of humble service, and serves joyfully.**

**As Paul exhorted, he does not estimate or think of himself more highly than he ought to think. He doesn’t have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance, but rather rates his ability with sober judgment, according to the degree of faith apportioned by God to him. (Romans 12: 3)**

**Such an enterprising person does not protect or guard his life, but makes it openly available for others. He is a truly involved servant.**

**What is God’s pronouncement upon the daring, enterprising person who has invested and developed his talents in the service of others? To both the two talented and five talented stewards, the Master answered. *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter into the joy of thy lord.”***

**Every Christian is to be involved in Christ’s work. Every Christian is a minister! Each believer is to use his spiritual gifts to develop a personal loving ministry in the church and in the world. Do you as a believer look at yourself as a minister? Have you discovered your spiritual gifts? Have you developed a personal ministry of love within the church and within the world.?**

### **III. “GIVE, GIVE, GIVE YOUR MONEY”**

**Your time does not belong to you! Your spiritual gifts and talents do not belong to you! Your money does not belong to you!**

**But I hear one saying just now, “I earned that money by my own sweat, effort, and talent!” Who gave you the opportunities? Every good bestowment comes from God!**

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**All my money belongs to God - all 10–tenths! However, God, the Master allows me, the steward, to use a large portion of that money to supply personal and family needs. He even allows me to spend some of that money on pleasures and personal luxuries.**

**However, God makes it very clear that I am to present a token of my love to Him in the form of money. The amount of that token is specified - one out of every ten dollars (1/10 of my total income).**

**God is a giving Creator and therefore I am to be a giving creature. “He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.” The Lord is full of mercy and goodness - to all men. He sends the rain to both the just and the unjust. All temporal and spiritual blessings are from the hand of a good God. What more could He give than to you He hath given? He even gave up His Son to die on the Cross, to take the penalty of your sin. Self-giving love is at the very center of the heart of God.**

**What should be one’s response to such love?**

**“Were the whole realm of Nature mine,  
That were a present far too small,  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my life, my soul, my all!**

**Christianity is one continuous Give! Give! Give! Of your time, talents, and money! Giving of your time and talents is great, but you must also give your money! And your giving must be done because of love! When you give your money to God, you are giving that which symbolizes your time and talent, training, and experience. Money given to God and the church is very significant, and therefore Jesus spoke often on the subject of money and stewardship in His parables. What you do with your money helps determine what you do with your soul!**

**The Scriptures tell us that ‘*God loveth a cheerful giver.*’ Believers are “*to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous.*” (I Timothy 6: 18)**

**The ‘closed hand’ is many times evidence of a ‘hardened heart.’ The ‘open hand’ is evidence of a ‘compassionate heart.’ Those who give most to the Lord’s work usually speak less about personal financial needs. The joyful giver is the joyful liver. One can never out give God.**

***“He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (II Corinthians 9: 7-8)***

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**It is possible to give away and to increase; it is possible to grasp and keep and actually to decrease. One’s capacity to receive from God is largely dependent upon one’s capacity to give to others. When you generously give to God’s work, remember, “God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more, so that there will not only be enough for your own needs, but plenty left over to give joyfully to others. It is as the Scriptures say: ‘The godly man gives generously to the poor. His good deeds will be an honor to him forever.’” (II Corinthians 9: 8-9, Living Bible)**

**To harden one’s heart and close one’s hands to the needs of God’s people and God’s Church, is to bring spiritual poverty and even spiritual destruction. Listen to what God said to His people, Israel, who had become stingy in their giving: *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me..But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”* (Malachi 3: 8-10)**

**Remember, money is to be used for God’s glory. That includes caring for family. It also includes caring for God’s family – the Church. Money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible tyrant. Money becomes a tyrant when one begins to love it. *“For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.”* (I Timothy 6: 10) If what you sow is ‘love of money,’ then what you eventually reap is ‘many sorrows.’**

**In ‘Abundant Life’, the most popular book of the 29 books which E. Stanley Jones wrote, Jones devoted a few pages to the subject of ‘Mastery Over Money’. He notes “Hold in mind that money is a good servant, but a terrible master. If money is your God, then your enfeebled personality is the price you pay for the worship of that God. Put in a stop where your needs end. After that all you make belongs to other people’s needs. Keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs. If you have too much, then invest it in persons. It is the only bank that will not break. The bank of human character will pay dividends through eternity. Invest all surpluses in that bank. While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn. When the level of your needs has been reached, then all you earn belongs to the needs of others, not as charity, but as right and justice.” (Abundant Living; E. Stanley Jones; pgs. 300, 301)**

**In his comments on the rich fool who built bigger barns to store his goods (Luke 12) Ambrose (who was one of the early ‘Church Fathers’) said, “The bosoms of the poor, the houses of widows, the mouths of children are the barns which last forever.”**

**While it is true that the possession of great wealth is attended with great dangers (snares) to the soul (because of the tendency for wealthy persons to become proud and**

self-reliant and self-indulgent and calloused to the ‘cries’ of the poor), it is also true that wealth can become a great ‘servant’ in the hands of the wealthy man who remains strongly committed to Christ and greatly sensitive to the hardships of the oppressed and poverty-stricken people around him.

**Wrote Paul (to Timothy) regarding the ‘wealthy’ Christians: “*Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone, but their pride and trust should be in the living God who always richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven - it is the only safe investment for eternity! And they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well.*” (I Timothy 6: 17-21)**

**I know of one ‘diligent’, ‘enterprising’, ‘industrious’, ‘hard working’ businessman who, through his creative and inventive genius, built a large company (which specialized in the engineering and building of large ‘earth-moving’ equipment). He became very wealthy, but this committed Christian businessman chose to remain a humble steward whose ‘projects’ in Christlike compassion became well-known. This ‘wealthy Christian’ gave away 90% of his money to Christian ‘causes’, and he founded a Christian University which, to this very time, is well-known for its excellence in training ‘engineers’.**

**In her study of the life and times of John Wesley (and the ‘lifestyle of Biblical simplicity’ which Wesley taught and practiced), Mary Alice Tenney notes: “The end of all stewardship is the doing good to the SOULS of men. The sharing of material goods will open the way to the joyful sharing of the Good News. Every rich man, Wesley said, would be asked in the end, ‘...didst thou labor to improve all outward works of mercy, as ‘means’ of saving souls from death?’ A spirit of joy should attend every act of stewardship. Even the expenditure of money upon life-necessities calls for a happy accounting, the steward saying (as Wesley noted), ‘Lord, thou seest I am going to expend this sum on that food, apparel, furniture, and thou knowest, I act therein with a single eye, as a steward of thy goods, expending this portion of them thus, in pursuance of the design thou hadst in entrusting me with them...And give me a witness in myself, that for this labour of love I shall have a recompense when thou rewardest every man...’ Those who had come into a fortune Wesley advised, ‘First, ask God what He would have you to do, feeling that you are standing “on the brink of a precipice.” Consider, “Having more means, I will do more good...than I did before.” All the additional goods...I am resolved to lay out, with all diligence in additional works of mercy.’ Money, according to Wesley is not to be condemned per se. In the present state of the world money is a good because it can be employed in leading the world to Christ.” (Blueprint For A Christian World; Mary Alice Tenney: pgs. 221, 223)**

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**John Wesley, whose life spanned most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was a remarkable servant of God in so many different ways. Besides the fact that he preached more than 40,000 sermons during his long ministry in England (and other places), John Wesley was a prolific writer, whose many books were read by multitudes of people. Recently it was brought to my attention that John Wesley has been called “The Father of the Religious Paperback” because approximately 5000 items came from his pen - sermons, tracts, and pamphlets of every kind. A Wesleyan scholar (Mary Alice Tenney) noted that John Wesley started a book business “for the sole purpose of giving religious education to his followers. Such was his ingenuity and enterprise that during his later years he made an annual profit of one thousand pounds a year, all of which he gave away. He always closed the year’s accounts, as he had advised his followers to do, with no balance remaining, except that needed for continuing the business and properly caring for his dependents.” (Blueprint For A Christian World; Mary Alice Tenney; pgs. 225-226)**

**As a result of the heavy volume of the sales of his many books, John Wesley could easily have become a very wealthy person, but, instead of accumulating wealth, he quickly gave his money away to feed the hungry and to relieve the poor and to educate the children. Wesley often exhorted Christians to seriously heed the warnings of Jesus regarding the terrible perils of riches, and Wesley “practiced what he preached”. Notes Mary Alice Tenney, “Wesley’s life-long attitude toward money was expressed when he said to his sister Patty Hall,...’money never stays with me: it would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find a way into my heart.’” (Ibid; pg. 225)**

**At any one time, Wesley had very little money, and at the end of his long life, John Wesley possessed practically nothing, materially-speaking, for he had given away nearly all his considerable earnings to the poor and the oppressed people around him.**

**Said John Wesley: “The Possessor of heaven and earth placed you here (on earth), not as a proprietor, but as a steward.” You own nothing: it all belongs to God! The Bible states this fact very clearly: “*The earth belongs to God! Everything in all the world is his!*” (Psalm 24: 1, Living Bible) God has placed you, as one of His stewards, in charge of His property (the earth), and you must someday give an account to God of your ‘stewardship’! Said Jesus, “*If you have not shown yourselves trustworthy in what belongs to someone else, who will give you what is your own?*” (Luke 16: 12, Barclay’s translation). William Barclay interprets the above quoted verse, as if Jesus were saying: “Upon earth you are in charge of things which are not really yours. You cannot take them with you when you die. They are only lent to you. You are only a steward over them. They cannot, in the nature of things, be permanently yours. On the other hand in heaven you will get what is really and eternally and essentially yours. And what you get in heaven depends on how you used the things of earth. What you will be given as your very own will depend on how you used the things of which you were only steward.” (Daily Study Bible; William Barclay; Luke; pg. 217)**

**TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE**

**Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days -  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.**

**Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love;  
Take my feet and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.**

**Take my voice and let me sing  
Always , only, for my King;  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee.**

**Take my silver and my gold -  
Not a mite would I withhold;  
Take my intellect and use  
Every power as Thou shalt choose.**

**Take my will and make it Thine -  
It shall be no longer mine;  
Take my heart - it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.**

**Take my love - my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store;  
Take myself - and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee.**

**Frances Ridley Havergal**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **REALIZE 'RATIONALE' FOR STEWARDSHIP**

**Genesis 1: 26-31**

**“MAKE ME MORE LIKE GOD” - Part 1**

**If God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the gold and silver in every mine, can create a vast universe with a spoken word, can cause the earth to burst forth with fruitfulness...then why in the world does He need me to give??**

**God has answered that question in very explicit and detailed ways. In fact, we don't get past the first chapter of Genesis without an answer to the question. In Genesis 1:26 He says: *“Let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion.”* God's expressed desire was to have a family and that those family members would be created in His image and in His likeness. What He expressed indicates that His children in His “image” would be a reflection of His Glory and His Characteristics. To create children in His “likeness” suggests that they will be compatible with Him.**

**God then suggested that this family, in His image and likeness, would have “dominion” or “have rule over” the earth and all its resources. These words are synonymous with “stewardship.” God placed His family members in a position of “stewards” over His creation with the provision that their faithful stewardship over God's resources would be a reflection of His image and His likeness.**

**We are very much aware that the image and likeness was marred by the breakdown of stewardship responsibilities on the part of Adam and Eve. To put it very simply, they appropriated for their personal use and enjoyment some of the resources God had placed under their “stewardship” but had reserved solely for Himself. They had very clear instructions as to the results of their disobedience in using these God-reserved resources. They also discovered that their wrongful decision led to their own impoverishment and separation from God. Consequently, the “image” of God in His family was destroyed.**

**God, in His love, desired to restore that image of Himself into His children. Since that image could only be restored through a new or second birth, God gave His son, Jesus Christ, to make it possible for man to be born again and, by that new birth, restore the image of the Father.**

**“Dear Lord, thank you that You gave the best You have so that I could become more like You. Let Your image be seen in my life.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The only image of God that many will see is in my life.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

Romans 8: 28-32

**“MAKE ME MORE LIKE GOD” - Part 11**

God’s plan in creation was restored through Christ with the added responsibility and privilege of being “stewards” of the message of hope, life, and restoration for the whole world.

The church was given the privilege and responsibility of disciplining those in whom God’s image was restored, to also produce “Christ-likeness” in them. Since “likeness” is developed by being together and interaction with each other, God has provided the graces of worship, devotional, and fellowship experiences for our benefit.

He continues to give His children “rule over” or “dominion” over the resources of life. This “stewardship” is the area where we exercise our obedience to Him and allow His “likeness” to be fully developed. The only way I can become like God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is to become an obedient giver.

The Word is so clear! *“For God so loved the world that He Gave His only begotten Son.”* The Son, Jesus Christ, is also a Giver. He is the giver of life, hope, salvation, strength, sustaining, and intercession. Every attribute of His personhood suggests “giving” of Himself.

Consequently, I cannot be like the Father until I become like His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the express image of the Godhead, bodily. I cannot be like the Son until I become a giver. As someone has said: “You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” I would add that you cannot be like Christ without giving.

Human nature longs to receive, to possess, and to appropriate all we can for our own benefit. To become a “giver” requires a new discipline of grace within us that is motivated by a desire to be like Christ. The discipline of giving is sometimes hard because it is antithetical to our natural and normal response. But the benefits of this discipline and grace of giving are absolutely phenomenal.

That’s God’s purpose! That’s God’s plan! To make us like Himself in His image and in His likeness. And the only way to be like Him is to be a giver.

**“O God, make me more and more like You in every discipline of my life.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** When you give, you are more like God than at any other time.

- Edward Rickman -

**Genesis 1:27-31; 2:15, 19-20**

### **THE STEWARDSHIP OF WORK**

**What is your attitude toward ‘work’? Do you see work as a ‘necessary evil’, the penalty for being a man? Do you see work as a mere nuisance or ‘intrusion’? Is work to you an unbearable load, an ‘unending drudgery’? Do you see work as something to be ‘avoided’? There are some people who avoid work because of their indolence and indifference and laziness. Or are you a person who ‘worships work’ (a ‘workaholic’)? Each of these attitudes toward work are non-Christian (unbiblical) attitudes.**

**What is the Christian attitude towards work? In brief, Christians are to see work as a gift from God. It cannot be denied that, because of the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden, work has become more difficult (Genesis 3: 17-19). Man works by the ‘sweat of his brow’ to make a living. And anyone who tries to raise a garden knows all about the thorns and thistles which grow faster than the bean plants. But even though the challenge and affects of work have been changed since the Fall of Man, the fact still remains that work was a part of God’s original intention for man - ever before the Fall. Our scripture reading for today points this out. Work was given to man by God before man fell into sin. Work is not a penalty from God for being a man. Because God intended that the creatures who were made in His own image (humans) should work, we must conclude that work is ‘sacred’. God created work for man’s good!**

**Work is man’s opportunity to perfect God’s good creation. God created a good world, but not a perfected world. God created ‘raw products’ in order that man may use the raw products to produce a completed product. God is the great Creator. Man is created in God’s image and likeness. Therefore, man is a ‘little creator’, created by God to create good out of nature’s raw materials. Following His several acts of creation, God declared His actions as ‘good’, but not ‘perfected’. It is left to man to perfect God’s incomplete world. Work is one way in which man experiences the purpose of his unique creation - namely, to glorify God by being creative. The result of man and God working together in creation is fellowship. Man is totally dependent upon God, but God has chosen to be ‘dependent’ upon man as well, if God’s creation is to be completed! God did not create finished products. He leaves this up to man! God could have created ready-made houses for man to live in, but, instead, God gives man trees from which man builds houses. God intends for man to subdue the earth, that is, to use the raw materials to create good and useful tools and products. However, man is not to exploit the earth’s resources. To waste the earth’s resources and to pollute the earth’s atmosphere is to sin against the Creator who intended the earth to be a blessing to mankind, not a curse!**

**“Lord of all creation, carefully guide me in the exercise of my God-granted power to dominate over the earth. Save me from the temptation to ‘lord over’ other people and to exploit the world’s resources for my own selfish use.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Man’s ‘lordship’ over the earth is always subject to Christ’s ‘lordship’ over all of created matter. He alone is the ‘Creator’ and the ‘Sustainer’ of life!**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

2 Thessalonians 3: 10-12; Ephesians 4: 28

### **REWARD FOR WORK WELL DONE IS MORE WORK TO DO!**

**Work is a gift from God. God created work for man’s good. Work is man’s opportunity to perfect God’s good creation. It is also true to say that work is a ‘sacrament to God’, i.e., your daily work is the chief way for you to serve God! The work you do must contribute to God, to your fellow men, and to the world in general. Your work must be unselfish in its motive. The unique work you choose must contribute to the ‘upbuilding’ of the entire community of which you are a part. (It is for this reason that Christians should not sell or deal with spirituous liquors or with tobacco, for neither of these things contribute to God or to man, and neither make for a more beautiful world). With these clear Biblical principles in mind, how should a Christian choose his ‘life’s work’? Notes Elton Trueblood: “The concept of vocation changes radically and crucially the way in which a young person approaches his life work or preparation for it. Apart from this concept his major questions often have to do with probable income, personal advancement, manner of living and choice of location. There is no doubt that many now choose their work with these specific considerations uppermost in their minds, for this is the ‘natural’ way. However, one who chooses in the light of vocation has a wholly different standard. His central interest is not in money or professional advancement, but in how he can make the best strokes to help clean up the mess of the world before it is too late. His motto is, ‘Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.’ The young person who has caught the vision implicit in the idea of vocation looks out at the world and tries to see how its need can be matched by his own latent powers. This, as millions know, is the way in which Albert Schweitzer determined to study medicine after he had already proved himself successful in another profession. The man who lives by the principle of vocation has substituted concern for advancement.” (Common Ventures of Life; pgs. 88, 89)**

**While it is true that a Christian must not become ‘unbalanced’, resulting in becoming a ‘workaholic’, it is also true that a Spirit-filled Christian gladly ‘embraces’ work and responsibility as a God-given gift. He knows that the reward for work well done is more work to do (i.e., greater responsibility in working as a ‘little creator’ with the Master Creator - the Lord God!). Work is an occasion for joyous creativity. “Our happiest moments are not those in which we ask how to be happy, but rather those in which we so lose ourselves in some creative task, which seems to us important, that we forget to take our own emotional pulse. When we plant trees, write books, build houses or make roads, we often find that we have been having a wonderfully good time and that we are not immediately driven to do something to have ‘fun’. We have had, all along, something better than anything which commercialized and self-conscious entertainment can ever provide.” (Elton Trueblood; Ibid; pg. 93)**

**“Father, help me always to remember that happiness comes not by idleness but by working, not by grasping but rather by giving. In the name of the Master Carpenter.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Life does not consist in the abundance of leisure and entertainment that I can consume, but in the abundance of loving service I can give!**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

**Proverbs 6: 6; 2 Corinthians 8: 13-15**

### **WORSHIP GOD THROUGH YOUR WORK!**

**Man is not to worship work, but man is to worship God through his work. How do you worship God in your work? First, by communing with God as you carry on your daily work. To ‘pray without ceasing’ is to commune with God as your closest Friend throughout your day, through all the changes and chances of life. This certainly includes the forty to sixty hours you spend working at your ‘secular employment’. Although your conscious mind must be on your work, you subconscious mind can be saturated with God! Susanna Wesley (the mother of John and Charles) had a prayer: “Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not to be confined to the church or closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation, but that everywhere I am in Thy presence.” Remember, God is with you just as much as you work on Monday as when you worship on Sunday. Work and prayer are simply two ways in which man and God cooperate together to change the world.**

**Not only can you worship God in your work by communing with God throughout the day, but also you can worship God in your work, secondly, by allowing God to be your partner in all of your work. One modern-day businessman who took this truth seriously is Stanley Tam. When he started his business several years ago, he determined to make God his ‘senior’ partner. No decisions would be made without consulting God, his ‘senior’ partner in the business. Not only did God honor his commitment by allowing Stanley Tam to build a large and financially-successful company, but God gave Stanley Tam unusual opportunities, through his expanding company, to witness to many persons. Stanley Tam had the joy of winning scores to Christ, right in his executive office! Whether you are an employer or an employee, you must allow God to be your partner in all of your work.**

**Third, you can worship God in your work by sharing God with others as you work. When opportunity arises, you can joyously and humbly share your testimony for Christ with your fellow employees. You can ‘share’ Christ by your example, i.e., by the way you work conscientiously for your ‘boss’ and by the way you act and react around your fellow employees.**

**“It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work. Smiting an anvil, sawing a beam, white-washing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God some glory if being in His grace you do it as your duty. To go to communion worthily gives God great glory, but to take food in thankfulness and temperance gives Him glory too. To lift up the hands in prayer gives God glory, but a man with a dungfork in his hand, a woman with a sloppail, give Him glory too. He is so great that all things give Him glory if you mean they should.” (Gerald Manley Hopkins)**

**“Lord of all ‘pots and pans’ make me a ‘saint’ by washing up the plates!” (Brother Lawrence)**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ is ‘sacred’, for the whole earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof!**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

1 Corinthians 3: 9; 1 Corinthians 6: 1

### THE LITTLE RED HEN STORY

One day Little Red Hen was scratching in the farmyard when she found a grain of wheat. Being a good manager and looking forward to the future she said: “Who will plant the wheat?” The answer from the duck, the dog, and the cat was negative: “Not I.” “Very well then,” said Little Red Hen, “I will.” So she planted the grain of wheat.

After some time the wheat grew tall and became ripe. “Who will cut the wheat?” Asked Little Red Hen. The reply was the same as before from the duck, the cat, and the dog. In fact, the same answer was given when it came time for threshing the wheat, taking the wheat to the mill to have it ground into flour, and making the bread. So Little Red Hen did the work.

But the response was different when the warm bread was taken from the oven. “Who will eat the bread?” The reply was, “Oh, I will!” said the duck, and the dog, and the cat. But they didn’t receive a taste of it; and Little Red Hen in turn shared it with her chicks.

That’s an interesting story, isn’t it? Does it bring back memories from grade one or two?

I don’t know, but maybe Little Red Hen wasn’t a good organizer, or motivator, or dynamic enough in this situation. I don’t know what kind of a personality she had since she didn’t seem to be able to get the assistance of the cat, and dog, and duck, to help her in the many duties of her household. Had she been more efficient and proficient her nerves would have been less taunt and her body aches hardly noticeable.

Perhaps the duck and cat and dog in conference among themselves hinted that - “Yes, we should help Little Red Hen in this project; it is worthwhile;” - - but their consciences were soothed by the fact that was not their things. Swimming, chasing mice, or hunting rabbits were more enjoyable.

What do you think?

Paul in 1 Corinthians 3: 9 says, “*For we are laborers together with God.*” Those are interesting words: l-a-b-o-r-e-r-s t-o-g-e-t-h-e-r w-i-t-h G-o-d.

Laborers: work, toil, exertion. A sign in my high school chemistry room read: “laboratory - if you use the first five letters and less of the last seven, you’ll succeed in this class.”

**TOGETHER:** one company; hand in hand; one heart; one mind.

**WITH:** a relation of proximity. In a local church together; by prayer and communication to God’s ambassadors, the missionaries, in other lands.

**GOD:** our supplier, director, superintendent.

One cannot do the job of building the Kingdom of God alone; we need each other. But it is God’s kingdom we are building. Let us be faithful and cooperative in fulfilling God’s call upon our lives.

**“Our Heavenly Father, with thanksgiving we express our desire to labor with You and others in the building of your kingdom! Amen!”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Today I will, by God’s grace, do my best to work in any way with others for the building of God’s Kingdom.

**- Floyd Cooper -**

**NOTES:**

**Luke 6: 27-38**

**THE MUSINGS OF A VERY GENEROUS GIVER...TO SOME CAUSES**

**It's the time again! The “Offering plate” is being passed. Somehow you don't feel inclined to give. The leadership is not performing to your satisfaction. The programs seem to be missing the mark. There's the feeling that your fellow travelers are pretty discouraged. The young people are really turned off. Many people are losing their jobs, and even yours isn't all that secure. You certainly don't sense the satisfaction you wish you did.**

**It seems so unreasonable that I should give such a high percentage of my income away. It costs so much to maintain a home these days. Kids are so expensive too. The prices of everything are going up continually. There just isn't enough to go around.**

**Perhaps if I had more of a voice in how my giving is spent, I'd feel better about it. Some of the decisions about spending are absolutely ridiculous. I really don't understand why they can't be considerate of the feelings of those of us who want our money spent with more discretion.**

**Another thing that bothers me - I never get a report of how my giving is actually used. I don't know how much of it is spent on salaries or maintenance or paper. I don't even know how much of it is being sent overseas.**

**And then, when I think about the benefits that I personally enjoy from my giving, it's hard to come up with a very long list. I really don't feel very generous.**

**Actually, when the “offering plate” is passed on April 15, I'm inclined to pass. The only problem is that the “offering plate” is being passed by the IRS!**

**You know, it really makes a difference in my decision to give when I find out who is passing the “plate”. I wonder why that is. I wonder why I suddenly become so willing to give up to 15.62% of my income for the Social Security Tax and another 18 - 35% of my income for Federal, State, and Local Taxes when April 15 rolls around. Why don't I just pass this opportunity by?**

**Perhaps I can rationalize this whole business of giving. After all, I am a citizen of this country and I do live in this locality. There are a few benefits that I enjoy. Let's see, if I give my 15.62% of my income to Social Security for 45 working years and I average \$50,000 a year in income, I'll have contributed \$351,450. I can expect to get at least \$12,000 - \$15,000 a year benefit for as long as I live. Of course if I don't live too long, the government will get to keep all the rest. That proves a great sense of security!?!?**

**Or does it?**

**For all those other taxes I pay I get roads to drive on, police protection, fire protection, and several other tangible benefits. I haven't quite figured out all the intangible benefits, but I'm sure they exist.**

**When I consider that my citizenship here is only short and temporary (on the average 72-75 years), I guess I can handle that type of giving. After all, there's a price to be paid if I don't!**

**“Dear Lord, help me to realize that my eternal citizenship is just as important (yes, much more important) as my temporary citizenship.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Giving without a choice often becomes a priority over giving with a choice which demonstrates where our greatest allegiance lies.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

## QUESTIONS

1. If God owns everything in the heavens and on earth, then why does He need for you (as one of His creatures) to give of your financial resources to Him? (Note Genesis 1: 26-31)
2. What ‘graces’ has God provided through the church to aid in God’s goal of restoring the ‘image of God’ in mankind and of producing ‘Christlikeness’ in human beings?
3. Tell why you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “The only way I can become like God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is to become an obedient giver.” Is it true that every attribute of God’s personhood suggests ‘giving’ of Himself? (Note John 3: 16) Is it true that you cannot be like Christ without giving?
4. Tell why you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “The discipline of giving is sometimes hard because it is antithetical to our natural and normal human responses of selfishness.”
5. Put the letter ‘F’ by those statements which are ‘unbiblical’ (i.e. false), and put the letter ‘T’ by those statements which are ‘Biblical’ (i.e., true):
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. Work is a ‘necessary evil’, the penalty for being a man.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. Work is a mere nuisance or ‘intrusion’, to be avoided as much as possible.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. Work is an unbearable load, an ‘unending drudgery’, all because the first human couple fell into sin.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. Work is an ‘escape’ from the responsibilities of one’s home life, and provides a temporary relief from marital conflicts.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. Work is a gift from God, a part of God’s original intention for man, even before the Fall in the Garden of Eden.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ f. God created work for man’s good, and therefore work is ‘sacred’ and is something for which all persons should give thanks to God.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ g. Work is one way in which man experiences the purpose of his unique creation - namely, to glorify God by being creative.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ h. Work is man’s opportunity to perfect God’s good creation.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ i. Work provides man the opportunity to fulfill God’s intention that man should ‘subdue’ the earth and use earth’s ‘raw materials’ to create good and useful tools and products.

- 6. Why is the wasting of earth’s resources and the polluting of the earth’s atmosphere considered a ‘sin’ against the Creator?**
- 7. Why is it true that man’s ‘lordship’ over the earth is always subject to Christ’s ‘lordship’ over all of created matter?**
- 8. If the unique work which you choose to do must contribute to the ‘upbuilding’ of the entire community of which you are a part, what are some types of work in which you should have no involvements?**
- 9. What biblical principles should a Christian be committed to when he chooses his ‘life’s work’? If probable income, personal advancement, manner of living, and choice of location should NOT be the factors in making a decision for one’s ‘life’s work’, then what should be the ‘main consideration’ in a Christian’s choice of his ‘life’s work’?**
- 10. Have you found that the following statement accurately describes your personal experience of “true happiness”? - “Our happiest moments are not those in which we ask how to be happy, but rather those in which we so lose ourselves in some creative task, which seems to us important, that we forget to take our own emotional pulse.”**
- 11. List at least three ways in which you can worship God through your work.**
- 12. In consideration of I Corinthians 3: 9, what specific talents, abilities, spiritual gifts, and training do you have which would enable you (as a ‘member of Christ’s Body’) to be an effective laborer in cooperation with other fellow Christians in the church and in the world at-large?**
- 13. In light of the fact that a rather large percentage of your total income is given involuntarily for Federal and State and Local Taxes (and Social Security Tax), does it seem reasonable for you (as a believer) to voluntarily give at least 10% (a tithe) of your income to God’s Kingdom work?**



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CORRECT 'ATTITUDES' FOR PROPER GIVING**

Genesis 4: 1-16

### THE ATTITUDE AND THE OFFERING – Part I

Her hand was in the cookie jar. She caught a glimpse of me around the corner and, not certain whether I had seen her act, quickly removed her hand and ran around the corner to me. With a questioning look on her face, she said, “Daddy, let me give you a hug and a kiss!”

It was a welcome offering but the offering was prompted by questionable motivations and attitudes. In essence, it could be explained as self-service offering.

Very early in the history of mankind is an intriguing story of two offerings being brought to the Lord, but with vastly different and disastrous results. Cain and Abel were the firstborn sons of Adam and Eve. The Book of Genesis records their own catastrophic failure in stewardship which resulted in a curse and banishment from the Garden of Eden. There are some very interesting questions about the actions of these first two children physically born into our world.

The birth of these young men is reported along with the announcement of their chosen means of livelihood. The very next thing reported is they each brought an offering to the Lord. This is amazing! Who taught them to give? Where did the concept of ‘an offering to the Lord’ originate? What prompted these offering?

One thing is quite obvious. Adam and Eve and family had developed a healthy respect for God and a vital awareness of His involvement in their lives. They had apparently learned some serious lessons in stewardship as well, since there is no other visible explanation for their sons having learned to bring offerings to the Lord. However, this early historic offering has some very informative clues as to the way in which offerings become acceptable to the Lord.

Cain brought an offering of “the fruit of the ground.” The essence of his offering was a ‘gratitude’ or ‘thank offering’ whereby Cain gave evidence of his belief in God as the Lord of the universe and the dispenser of material and earthly blessings. But, the Word says God did not look with favor on Cain’s offering. There was something about the offering which did not meet God’s expectations.

Abel’s offering was “of the first-fruits of his flock.” It is believed by many scholars that Abel brought a thank offering just as Cain did, but, in addition, he also brought the ‘fat portions’ or the best of the firstborn of his flock. By this additional offering he acknowledged himself as a sinner and professed faith in the promised Messiah. God was obviously pleased with both the essence and the attitude of Abel’s offering.

“God loves a cheerful giver.” The attitude with which we give a gift to God is just as important as the gift itself that we present God.

“Dear Lord, help me to be a cheerful giver and recognize You as Lord over all my life and resources.”

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: A gift to God is pleasing to Him only if it is given with the right spirit and attitude.**

**-Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

Genesis 4: 1-16

## THE ATTITUDE AND THE OFFERING – Part II

There is a significant contrast in these two offerings which results in the response of Cain. He was angry at God’s response to his brother’s offering as opposed to his own. But instead of applying his response to his own problem he applied his anger toward his brother. God clearly pointed this out to Cain in Genesis 4: 6: *“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?’”*

God, in His mercy and grace, brought Cain to a realization of his sin, warned him of its danger, and clearly indicated the way of escape. But Cain’s misguided attitude was set. His anger led to the first murder recorded in human history.

On the other hand, Abel’s offering included another dimension. As is recorded in Hebrews 11: 4, Abel’s offering was brought in ‘faith’, and because of his faith he was commended as a righteous man.

The contrast of these two attitudes was dramatized in the action of an unrepentant and angry Cain against his brother Abel who was a righteous man because of his open recognition of his own need, and his faith in God as providing righteousness to replace his sinfulness.

There are several vital lessons to be gleaned from this early historical drama. First of all, there is a right and a wrong attitude toward the relationship between God and the material universe.

The very professions the two brothers chose are indication of their focus. Cain’s focus was on settled possession and enjoyment of the earth. On the other hand, Abel’s focus was on the temporary nature of life and the need to sacrifice some of the possessions of this life to prepare for eternal life.

Jesus illustrated the two contrasting attitudes in Matthew 6: 24: *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”*

Secondly, there is a right and wrong relationship to God and our fellow man which will determine the acceptability of our offerings. Jesus illustrates this well in Matthew 5: 21-24 when he talks about anger with one’s brother. He makes a very conclusive statement in verses 23 and 24: *“...if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”* The acceptability of our offerings is dependent on right relationships with our brothers and sisters. Right relationships with brothers and sisters are directly connected to right relationships with God and attitudes toward His provision for our salvation.

Thirdly, an offering alone, no matter its value, will never appease a Holy God. It must be accompanied by a repentant faith in God and right relationships to be acceptable to God.

**Lastly, the Biblical concept of stewardship, as illustrated in the beginning of time, requires a faith relationship to the giver of all resources and a demonstrated recognition that God is owner of all we possess.**

**“Dear Lord, make me aware today of any areas of my life that are not absolutely consecrated to You and Your service.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Our focus on the stewardship issues is inexplicably intertwined with our eternal destiny.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

**Genesis 6: 9-22**

**SACRIFICING OUR TREASURES - Part I**

**Moving is painful experience! Every move seems to become more painful. Some of the things we have collected over the years and counted as absolute treasures begin to lose some of their value when you learn it will cost more to move or ship them than they are worth.**

**On the other hand, there are some things we possess which have such strong sentimental value that we can't bear to part with them. Some of them we have protected at great cost to ourselves. We have given of ourselves and our resources to protect and insure some of the valuable assets.**

**But what if God asked us to give them to Him?**

**I am reminded of Noah's experience. Just imagine what Noah and his family had collected for 600 years! When God recognized the righteousness of Noah and the wickedness and violence of the world in which Noah lived, God instructed Noah to prepare for a major move.**

**The first thing Noah had to do was listen to God's instructions for constructing his own moving van (commonly called ARK). The ramifications of accepting this assignment from God were absolutely breathtaking!**

**First of all, Noah recognized that there was only one way to save himself and his family. The only other alternative was to take his chances that God wouldn't really carry through with His judgement on the earth. Perhaps God would overlook the circumstances and provide another means of escape. In that case he and his family could go on living their lives normally and determine their own course of action.**

**On the other hand, Noah recognized that if he believed God and obeyed God's instructions, it would require him to commit his life, his family, his time, and, and yes, all of his resources. The commitment was irrevocable.**

**For literally decades, Noah labored and committed and gave of his resources to complete the construction of his “moving van” which would ultimately be the last and only means of salvation for himself and his family. It's hard to imagine the ridicule he experienced. It's also difficult to fathom the depths of his faith to be building a “moving van” which would float on water when it had never rained and there was certainly no way to get this ship to a dock for launching. When we can't see the future, it's important to believe God and exercise our faith in His direction.**

**“Dear Lord, by faith I give myself, my family, and my resources to You to be preserved and used by You!”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: “When you can't see very far ahead, walk ahead as far as you can see.” (Dawson Trotman)**

**- Edward Rickman -**

Genesis 8: 18-22

### SACRIFICING OUR TREASURES - Part II

**When all the preparations of decades of work were finally completed, imagine the faith it took and the ridicule to which Noah was exposed when he took that menagerie into the ark and then took all his family into that “moving van” and then waited for 7 days for it to rain.**

**Then the rains came - for 40 days they came! And then the waters stood on the earth for 150 days.**

**For a year and 17 days, Noah had his family in this sealed “moving van” with an unbelievable collection of animals - and the ventilation was likely less than adequate!**

**Now, here’s the most dramatic and shocking part of the whole story.**

**When they all left the ark, *“Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.”* (Genesis 8:20)**

**Here was Noah sacrificing the best of his resources after having spent most of his long life building a vessel to save them! What a turn of events!**

**He and his whole family had lived with and protected those animals (resources) for over a year in that unique environment in order to protect them from certain destruction! And, now that he has saved them, he is sacrificing them! If this isn’t a paradox, I’ve never seen one!**

**Consider a few stewardship lessons that become apparent in this event:**

- 1. God planned and Noah implemented the salvation of his family as well as preserving the resources of the earth which provided the means for sustaining life.**
- 2. Noah recognized that these resources were God’s gift to him and his family and needed to be preserved.**
- 3. Noah was willing to sacrifice even that which he had spent years preserving to honor God and express his worship and thanks!**

**These are principles which should be applied to everything we have. God was so pleased with Noah’s sacrifice that *“...he said in his heart: Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every indication of his heart is evil from childhood; and never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.”* (Genesis 8: 21)**

**Noah’s example of stewardship has preserved life for all these centuries. May we be faithful to assure that the treasures in our “moving van” are also available to give to God for His purposes and Glory!**

**“Dear Lord, my family is so precious to me, I want to give everything to You and ask You to preserve their souls for You.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When God talks to me about the way to save my family, it will likely require total commitment.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

**Matthew 6: 19-24**

**“LIFE’S TREASURES...FITTED INTO A SUITCASE” - Part I**

**She looked tired and somewhat dismayed. As she furtively looked around for a place to sit in the crowded area of the Chicago airport, she caught my eye and noted there was an empty seat beside me. She quickly moved to sit beside me with a sigh of relief. I greeted her with a comment about the weather. She immediately replied that the weather was certainly better here than from where she had come. It was an opening to inquire of her travels which led to her telling me of her trip to a town in Ontario, Canada, which was very familiar to me. After we had shared some mutual knowledge of the Ontario town she had visited, which was also her birthplace, she began to share the purpose of her visit.**

**With an obviously heavy spirit, this newfound acquaintance began to share that she had returned to her hometown for the difficult task of moving her aged mother to a nursing home. The pain in her voice indicated the trauma of her experience. Just before the call to board the plane, she ended the conversation with this very poignant statement: “You know, it’s so sad! You spend your whole life collecting and treasuring your possessions, and you end up with everything you have in a little suitcase.”**

**As that statement began to sink into my consciousness, I started to develop a new awareness of the North American “mind set” about the accumulation and use of the treasures we call “OURS”.**

**Some years ago, I began to notice a popular phrase appearing on T-shirts, placards, and other places which read, “He who ends up with the most toys WINS!” However, more recently, I saw a T-shirt which read, “He who dies with the most toys STILL DIES!” What a grim reminder that the accumulation of things does not prevent or alter, in any way, the inevitable stages of life which culminate with death and eternity.**

**Yet, even though there is that conscious awareness that the day is coming when we will experience total separation from our treasures, and, that the size and amount of those treasures will have absolutely no effect on our ultimate destiny, the majority of people are still clinging to their treasures. The tendency continues for us to evaluate our lives on the basis of these possessions.**

**Now there is nothing inherently wrong with having possessions. After all, God created all things for our use and enjoyment. He gave us the skills and the abilities to create beautiful things and produce wealth of every kind. He endowed us with the privilege of producing as much as our capability will allow.**

**Our problem, however, is maintaining a right perspective on the meaning, the purpose, and the ultimate use of all the products of our skills, abilities, and labors. Without that right perspective, our happiness, fulfillment, hopes, dreams, visions, and aspirations all ride the roller-coaster of the waxing and waning of our economic worth.**

**“Dear Lord, help me understand that my worth to You has nothing to do with the things I possess. They all belong to You.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My worth and value are not dependent on how much I have, but on who owns what I have.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

Matthew 6: 19-24

**“LIFE’S TREASURES...FITTED INTO A SUITCASE” - Part II**

The Word of God is so practical and pointed in steering us to maintain the right perspective on our treasures let me suggest some of the ways in which we lose a proper perspective:

**I. By placing our treasures in the wrong place.**

No, I’m not talking about which bank you use or which properties you buy. It’s much more basic. Jesus said it like this, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...but store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven...”* Matthew 6: 19-20.

We need to internalize the concept that the depository of our treasures will determine both the integrity and balance of our earthly life and the ultimate destiny and rewards of eternal life. Living by this concept would free us from the mad scramble to accumulate treasures and find the temporary happiness they bring when they are used to indulge our pleasures.

We also lose a proper perspective:

**II By prizing our treasures for the wrong reasons.**

Some of the happiest and most productive people I know have the perspective that their possessions all belong to God. They plan to use only a necessary portion for their own use and all the rest belongs to and is available to God. They treasure their possessions for the right reasons. They have experienced the fulfillment and joy of using them to enhance God’s kingdom work.

We also lose perspective:

**III. By protecting our treasures for the wrong time period.**

We have been taught in many ways that there are certain time periods in life for which we should concentrate our economic planning:

- For marriage and establishing a home
- For the education of our children
- For retirement

These appear to be the highest priorities. They are all very important. They should all have their proper place in our planning and living our lives. However, the essence of scripture is that our over-arching plan for life, and even our treasures, must include eternity. Otherwise, the use and treasuring of all possessions take on a self-indulgent value which we hope will see us through to the end of life.

**The perspective we demonstrate in viewing and using our treasures will determine whether we come to the last days of our lives with “everything we have in a little suitcase” or an “eternal reward in heaven” because of our investment. Which are you planning for?**

**“Dear Lord, give me a new perspective on what I am doing with my earthly treasures and give me a new love for giving to you. Amen!”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Not only is it true that “Where your treasure is, there will be your heart be also,” but it is equally true that where your heart is, there will your treasure be also.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

Haggai 1: 1-11

**“YOU CAN’T AFFORD NOT TO GIVE!”**

Haggai, the prophet is speaking to people who have obviously allocated God’s portion of their resources for personal use. It is illustrated in these words” Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this (the Lord’s) house remains a ruin?” Following this very revealing question, the Prophet Haggai gives them a very direct message from God which demonstrates the principle of personal loss:

*“You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” (Haggai 1: 6)*

The principle is still there. They are going on with their lives and were obviously using every resource available for their personal pleasure, but whether they were aware or not, the resources they were allocating were being dissipated in interesting and strange ways. In Haggai 1: 9, he continues with these words:

*“You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why? Declares the Lord Almighty. Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.”*

There are many other scriptures to be cited which illustrate the principle. Jesus stated the principle with convicting clarity in several different passages: What you keep you lose, and what you lose you keep.

It seems a strange paradox that “keeping” can cause “losing,” but it’s a principle that applies to every facet of life.

Throughout my personal journey, there have been tough times when I thought I couldn’t possibly afford to give. Surely the Lord will understand if I use some of His resources for my personal use. What I have personally discovered, however, is that every time I did this I experienced personal loss in some area. There have been automobile breakdowns, unexpected home repairs, surprise bills, and a host of other unexpected expenses. For me, personally, I have discovered that the principle is very much alive - allocating God’s resources for my personal use always results in losses that are as great or greater than what I had hoped to gain.

I suggest that the same principle works in your life. Even if you do not give God His portion of your resources, you still give it through “holes in your pocket”. When you think you can’t afford to give, remember this principle based on God’s word: “You can’t afford NOT TO GIVE.”

“Dear Lord, help me to always respect the principle of Your ownership and Your expectations of my use of resources.”

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will not take for granted that everything under my care is for my personal use. It all belongs to God and some of it must be designated for His purposes.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

**QUESTIONS**

- 1. Do you agree that the attitude with which you give a gift to God is just as important as the gift itself which you present to God? What kind of attitude should you have when you approach God with your ‘gift’?**
- 2. Why do you think Abel’s offering was accepted and Cain’s offering was rejected by God, as recorded in Genesis 4: 1-16?**
- 3. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “The acceptability of our offerings is dependent on right relationships with our brothers and sisters. Right relationships with brothers and sisters are directly connected to right relationships with God and attitudes toward His provisions for our salvation.”**
- 4. How would you describe the ‘sacrifice’ which Noah had to make in order to obey God, when he built the ark? How is Noah’s sacrifice an ‘example’ to us of the kind of sacrifice that we (as believers) should be willing to make in order to obey God? Can you think of a committed person (Christian) whose great sacrifice (of material possessions, or of personal convenience and comfort and reputation, etc.) was necessary for him/her to demonstrate personal obedience to God’s call to service?**
- 5. As a steward of the Living God, what are some of the ‘treasures’ of your personal life which you have made available to give to God for His purposes and glory?**
- 6. Why is it so foolish for you to evaluate your life on the basis of material possessions? (Note Luke 12: 13-15; I Timothy 6: 7; Hebrews 13: 5)**
- 7. From a Biblical viewpoint, what is the right and proper perspective on the meaning and purpose and use of all the products of your skills and abilities and labors?**
- 8. Does your personal worth and value to God have any correlation with the amount of material possessions or personal achievements which you have? Why or why not?**
- 9. Share your interpretation and application of the following statement: “The depository of our treasures will determine both the integrity and balance of our earthly life and the ultimate destiny and rewards of eternal life.”**
- 10. For what good and godly purposes should you ‘prize’ your personal material possessions?**
- 11. Beyond the legitimate use of your financial resources for earthly concerns such as (1) marriage and the establishment of your home, (2) the education of your children, (3) your retirement years, how can you use your financial resources in such a way that they will produce benefits which outlast time (with ‘eternal dividends’)?**

- 12. Have you ‘discovered’ from your own ‘sad experience’ that allocating God’s resources for your own personal use resulted in personal losses that were as great or greater than what you had hoped to gain by using some of God’s ‘tithes and offerings’ for your own use? (Note Malachi 3: 8-10)**
- 13. Give your explanation and application of the following Biblical principle: “What you keep you lose, and what you lose you keep.” (Note Proverbs 28: 27; Proverbs 3: 9-10)**
- 14. What ‘curses’ did the ancient people of God reap from God, as a result of their preoccupation with personal accumulation of wealth (“living in paneled houses”) and their neglect of maintaining the ‘House of the Lord’ in beautiful form? (Note Haggai 1: 1-11) Do you think it is ‘right’ and ‘proper’ for modern-day Christians to spend great amounts of money to purchase beautiful houses while, at the same time, their own church buildings and missionary enterprises are in disrepair?**
- 15. Tell what is meant by the statement: “You can’t afford not to give!”**
- 16. Tell to what degree you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “Even if you do not give God His portion of your resources, you still give them through ‘holes in your pockets’.”**

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RECOGNIZE 'POTENTIAL' OF GENEROUS GIVING**

**Matthew 13: 1-13**

**MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT SEED - Part I**

**Rummaging through an unpacked box from our last move (several years ago), I discovered two packages of flower seeds. The moment I saw them I recalled my wife’s request to plant those seeds. In fact, I recalled several requests to plant those seeds over the years preceding the last move. The picture on the packets showed an abundance of beautiful flowers. The potential for those beautiful flowers was obviously inside those seeds. At least, it once was. But what do I do now?**

**I have several choices. I can conclude that the seed is old and worthless, and discard it. I can carefully prepare a seed bed and plant the seed, knowing full well that I may be wasting my time. Or, I can carelessly scatter the seed among other seed and if it grows, fine - if it doesn’t, fine.**

**With the tremendous power of hindsight, I recognized that I held in my hands lost opportunity, misplaced priorities, diminished potential, and broken promises all in two little packets of seeds.**

**The jolting message of this moment began to expand in my mind. I began to think about the choices and the priorities that are determined daily and even momentarily in our lives.**

**Let’s consider the fact that each of us has been given a relatively consistent supply of two kinds of “seed.” For convenience, let’s call them simply “spiritual seed” and “material seed”.**

**The “spiritual seed” is supplied in our lives for both personal growth and maturity and also for the sharing of witness, love, and service. In one sense, there is an unlimited supply of this resource for our appropriation.**

**On the other hand, the “material seed” represents our personal allocation of material resources which are generally fairly constant and are, for most people, limited in availability. Because of the limited supply of material resources, prioritization of how those resources are expended becomes an absolute necessity.**

**Recently, I listened to a discussion of the ‘parable of the sower’ as recounted in Mark 4. I was reminded of an inherent principle in this parable which I have never heard discussed. It is simply the discussion about where seed is to be sown.**

**In this parable, it appears that the farmer sowed the seed rather indiscriminately. Some of it fell on the path, some on the rocks, some among thorns, and some on good soil. It is evident in the parable that there was absolutely no fruit from any of the seed except that which was sown on the good and prepared soil.**

**Having had a farm background and recalling how expensive it is to sow valuable seed, my response would be that the next time the farmer sowed seed he would surely be more discriminate in where the seed was sown. Surely, one of the inherent principles of this passage would include a careful stewardship appraisal of the how and where we sow the valuable seed (resources) we have been given.**

**“Dear Lord, help me to remember that today I am sowing seed for You. Help me to sow it in the right places in the right manner.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: How I sow my seed will determine the harvest of my life.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

**Luke 8: 5-15**

**MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT SEED - Part II**

**Let’s consider some possible applications of Jesus’ parable, as recorded in Luke 8: 5-15.**

**The “seed” represents the “word” or the Gospel. The implication is that all disciples are responsible for involvement in the ministry of the Word. That involvement takes on many different forms. Some are involved in preaching, teaching, administration, and other direct ministries. However, all are responsible to be stewards of resources which supply the means for the ministry of the Word. Consequently, some are directly involved in ministry while others are indirectly involved, but there is mutual responsibility.**

**Return for a moment to the inherent principle of this parable. There may be adequate latitude for providing general ministry to all, but I would maintain that Jesus Himself was teaching the importance of focusing ministry priorities on areas where there is the greatest potential for receptivity, growth, and fruitful discipleship. It would be foolish indeed to focus our priorities on sowing our “seed” on the places where there is little or no hope of fruitfulness at the expense of neglecting the areas where there is great receptivity and fruitfulness.**

**It is incumbent on all of us who have “seed” (resources) to be very discerning as we make decisions as to where and how we “sow” our resources.**

**It is abundantly obvious that there are ‘infinite’ numbers of appeals for our resources. It should also be obvious to us that not every entity appealing for “ministry” funds can produce evidence of fruitfulness. Thus, the necessity of using discernment is where and how we “sow” our “resources.”**

**Jesus and his disciples practiced this very principle. When Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, he instructed them very specifically about places where there was no receptivity to their message.**

**As you make decisions about where and how to sow your “seed,” be sure it is planted where you are assured it will grow and produce fruit for the glory and honor of God, and the increase of the Kingdom.**

**“Dear Lord, there are so many needs around me. Help me to discern where You can best use the resources of my life.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I must be certain that I don't waste those “seeds” (resources) that belong to God. God can only produce the fruit if I give Him my resources.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

John 6: 1-14

### SITTING ON EVERYONE’S LUNCH - Part I

It must have been a rather traumatic experience for a young fellow to realize that, out of more than 5,000 people, he was apparently the only one who had brought his lunch. What was even more frightening was what to do with what he had brought.

Here were twelve men walking through the crowd trying to find whatever food was available to feed all these people. And then here was a young lad who had five loaves of bread and two fish. Perhaps he began to realize that he was about to be asked to give up what he had. What should he do?

Now the first question that arises is why he had that much food when no one else had any at all? We could speculate that perhaps he was a young entrepreneur. Here was a great opportunity to try to sell some of this food among the large crowd of hungry people. Or, it could be that he was on an errand to deliver that food somewhere and just got caught up in the crowd. Still more likely, it was his own provision for the day.

And now, whatever the reason for his possession of this important commodity, he was about to lose it. Perhaps he began to think how he could protect his possession. There was no place to hide it! His pockets were not large enough to hold it! There wasn’t any way to escape! Could it be that he decided to “sit on it”?

Now that’s an interesting picture from our perspective of the whole story. In his mind he was sitting on his own possession to protect it. From our perspective, he was “sitting on everyone’s lunch.”

Could it be that we too are unknowingly “sitting on everyone’s lunch”?

Consider some of the important principles which come out of this story and then apply them to your “own lunch.”

**Principle of Ownership:** As this young lad did, we too must learn that what we think is ours is really His. When He asks us for our resources, He has every right to do so - He owns them!

**Principle of Value:** The question probably uppermost in this young man’s mind was, “What is He going to do with my lunch in a crowd of people like this?” He soon learned the reality of the truism that “Little is much when God is in it!”

**Principle of Supply: On the one hand, our Lord was and is committed to “feeding the hungry.” Consequently, He asked for the available resources, regardless of size and quantity, and made an adequate supply to meet the need.**

**Secondly, he never fails to supply for those who “Give their lunch away!” Here is an obvious case of giving your lunch away and eating it too!**

**God will never allow those who are willing to give to be hungry while others are fed.**

**“Dear Lord, give me a new vision of the multitudes in need and help me give my resources to help meet those needs.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When we try to hide our resources and hold them for ourselves, a multitude of others will be deprived of the blessing we could provide.**

**- Edward Rickman -**

**NOTES:**

John 6: 1-14

## SITTING ON EVERYONE’S LUNCH - Part II

Let’s consider some additional truths from this scripture.

**Principle of Participation:** “Surely somebody else will give up their lunch! Surely, there’s another way to accomplish this unbelievable task!”

No, He wants you to participate! He wants you to “give your lunch.” He wants you to catch a vision of a hungry host of people and say “I’ll participate - Here’s my lunch - Here’s all I have!”

There would have been no miracle without the participation of one willing young man who saw the need and offered his resources to help meet the need.

**Principle of Multiplication:** When the willingness of people matches the willingness of God, the principle of multiplication is activated.

A good friend of mine was once speaking in a Youth Camp when an offering was taken. A young lad who was obviously very poor and had no visible resources came forward and placed an old broken and well-chewed ballpoint pen in the offering basket with these despairing words, “It’s all I have to give.” The idea came that they would auction the pen with an explanation of who had given it and the spirit of the gift.

The consequence was that the pen was not only auctioned once, but as those young people caught the spirit of this gift, it was sold and resold over and over again until the value was multiplied to well over \$100.00 by the end of the camp.

The principle of multiplication is in direct proportion to the spirit in which the gift was given, not the amount. Jesus multiplied the lunch more than 5,000 times.

**Principle of Celebration:** What a celebration it must have been for the young lad!

He was full - there were leftovers twelve times as large as the gift - and he was happy! And it was all because he “gave away his lunch”!

“O, Lord, I give You ‘my lunch’ to feed to others. I know You will also care for me.”

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Think about it. How many hungry people’s lunch are you sitting on? “Give your lunch away”!

- Edward Rickman -

Matthew 10: 42; 20: 26-28; Mark 4: 30-32

### LITTLE IS MUCH; SMALL IS GREAT

In his commentary of Mark, Dr. David McKenna writes, “In the Kingdom of God, the hidden is open, natural is supernatural and small is great”.

God spoke through Isaiah, the prophet, saying “*My ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts*” (Isaiah 55: 9). God measures success differently than we do. Man’s measurement is how great we are, what a big and wonderful job we do. The “Who’s Who” on man’s gold plated plaque would list those who built the largest churches, sang or spoke to the largest crowds, or served on most committees.

I have seen Christians working under adverse conditions. Some laboring among the poorest people in the world. Rather than complaining, they were happy and content in their circumstances. Had they another life to live, they would have given that life also. I recall the story of a missionary returning to his homeland. On board ship an important gentleman was also returning home. The Red Carpet had been laid, and a brass band was awaiting his arrival. There was no one waiting for the missionary. Alone and dejected, he entered his hotel room. It was then Jesus spoke, “*My child, you are not home yet!*”

Mr. Wilson was a quiet man. He didn’t sing, teach a class, serve on the board, or any committees, but there was one job he did faithfully every week. He mowed the church lawn with perfection. I see the name, Mr. Wilson, “Church Grass Cutter” on God’s list of “who’s who”.

God’s solid gold plaque has a different list of “who’s who”. Those who have given Him their lives as a living sacrifice, appear on this list, regardless of the size of accomplishments. God desires our obedience to all His commands. With God there is no great or small. A tiny mustard seed has great potential when placed in God’s hands. There is a song that puts it like this: “LITTLE IS MUCH IF GOD IS IN IT. LABOR NOT FOR WEALTH OR FAME. THERE’S A CROWN AND YOU CAN WIN IT. IF YOU’LL GO IN JESUS’ NAME.”

“Jesus, help me to do the task You ask of me, regardless of it’s size or importance. Just a cup of water may be all You ask.”

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** I will not bury the talents God has given me. But use them for the kingdom’s sake.

- Lowell Weller -

Malachi 3: 8-10; Psalms 24: 1

### THE STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY

If the money which you call ‘yours’ is really not yours, but is instead ‘God’s property’, then how should you use the money that is in your possession? The Bible says that the man who does not provide for his family is ‘worse than the heathen’ (I Timothy 5: 8). Obviously, money is to be used to supply the common necessities of life - food, clothing, shelter, and health needs. And, oftentimes, God will permit you to have and to enjoy even a few luxuries. However, you must always watch your ‘desires’, for your desire for ‘things’ can easily ‘get out of hand’. It is easy to abuse God’s gift of money, with the result of robbing both family and God. John Wesley declared emphatically that whoever has sufficient food to eat and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, should be content. Hebrews 13: 5 says, *“Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, ‘I will never, never fail you nor forsake you.’”* (Living Bible) The apostle Paul wrote (about himself): *“I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstances may be. I know now how to live when things are difficult and I know how to live when things are prosperous. In general and in particular I have learned the secret of facing either plenty or poverty.”* (Philippians 4: 11, 12, Phillips) The story is told of one who was taken to the City to view all of the conveniences, and luxuries, and glamour that the world could offer, the possession of which makes it hard for many men to die. When the man who had taken the tour in the big City had returned to his motel room, he thanked God that he did not have any desire for any of the City’s riches which he had seen. That man was far richer than those who owned all the wealth and enjoyed all the glamour of the City! E. Stanley Jones wisely observes: *“There are two ways to be wealthy - one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants. In taking the latter way to be wealthy you transfer to the inside of you the real wealth that cannot be taken away by depression or death.”*

You must give an accounting to God in eternity for the way you use your earthly (material) possessions. Note the principles which John Wesley believed should guide every Christian in the use of money: **“GAIN** all you can without hurting either yourself or your neighbor, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you: - **SAVE** all you can, by cutting off every expense which serves only to indulge foolish desire; to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children; and then **GIVE** all you can, or, in other words, give all you have to God...Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God’s, be it more or less; by employing, on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner that you may give a good account of your stewardship.”

**“Father, deliver me from the ‘greedy hand’ which grasps for the world’s passing ‘fancies’, and give me the ‘grace’ which enjoys a life of simplicity and service.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Money is a useful ‘servant’ but a cruel ‘master’.  
I determine to master money, not be mastered by money!**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

2 Corinthians 8: 1-15

**BENEFITS OF GENEROUS GIVING**

One of the projects nearest to Paul’s heart was the gathering of the collection for the church of Jerusalem. This Jerusalem Church was the “Mother Church” of all the churches, but she was poor and needed support from the newly organized Gentile churches. Paul appeals to the other churches to exercise their generosity by coming to the aid of the Jerusalem Church at this time of great need. Paul asks the Corinthian church to help in this project and appeals to the people of the church on the basis of their past good record (2 Corinthians 8: 7). *“Because you have excelled in every other area of Christian endeavor, surely you will excel in this important area - financial generosity”*, says Paul.

There are many ‘benefits’ to generous giving. First, generous giving saves us from a life of greed and materialism. As believers, let us never despise money and let us always legitimately enjoy some of the good things which money can give to us, but let us never become enamored with wealth and material possessions. Let’s keep a light hold on material things. Let’s be the master of money and use it for the glory of God and for the good of others. One way to avoid the ‘stranglehold of materialism’ is to involve oneself in generous giving.

Secondly, generous giving develops a capacity for great fruitfulness. The more one gives, the more one develops a capacity to give. It’s like everything else in life. The one who most uses his muscles is the one who become the strongest. The one who practices the piano the most is usually the one who finds piano most enjoyable. The one who is most generous with his money is the one who finds most joy in giving. He who sows love, sacrifice, and service is he who reaps a Christ-honoring harvest both in time and in eternity.

Third, generous giving develops a capacity for joyfulness. It is still true that miserly people are miserable people, and generous people are joyous people. The Bible says that it is *“more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20: 35). Frances Havergal wrote those familiar words which we often sing: “Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold.” This hymn writer did what she wrote about. This personal testimony is found in her writings: *“‘Take my silver and my gold’ now means shipping off all my ornaments - including a jewel cabinet which is really fit for a countess - to the Church Missionary Society...I don’t think I need tell you I never packed a box with such pleasure.”*

**“Father, teach me your amazing and mysterious ‘ways’ - that I gain blessings by giving, that I receive your best by giving up my best for the sake of your Kingdom! Because you**

**are a ‘self-giving God’, enable me (a person made in your ‘image’) to become a ‘self-giving creature’, finding great delight as I exercise great stewardship!”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” (Jim Elliott)**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

**QUESTIONS**

- 1. What, for you, constitutes the “spiritual seed” and the “material seed” which God has allotted to you, to sow in your life?**
- 2. As a Christian witness, who is given the responsibility to “sow the seed of God’s Word” in the world, do you ‘know’ at the time you are sowing the Word (i.e., spreading the Good News of Christ’s salvation) which persons (sinners) will be receptive to Christ’s message and which persons will not be receptive? What lesson do you think Jesus was seeking to communicate to his listeners (including His disciples) when He shared the “Parable of the Sower” (Matthew 13: 1-9)?**
- 3. Give your interpretation and application of the following statement: “How I sow my seed will determine the harvest of my life.” (Note Galatians 6: 7; 2 Corinthians 8: 6-12)**
- 4. From whom does the Christian receive ‘wisdom’ to discern how best to invest his life for God (i.e., how best to ‘sow the good seed of God’s Word’ to needy persons in the world), that the believer may enjoy a bountiful spiritual harvest for God? (Note James 1: 5; John 15: 16; John 16: 13-15). Are there ‘times’ (‘occasions’) when a discerning Christian should be ‘discriminatory’ as to whom he should ‘sow the seed of God’s Word’? Is it ‘proper’ for you (as a sincere believer) to ask God to help you to ‘sow’ in the ‘right places’ and in the ‘right manner’? Why or why not? Should Christians ‘focus’ their priorities on sowing God’s ‘seed’ on the places where there is the greatest potential for receptivity, growth, and fruitful discipleship?**
- 5. Because the appeal for ‘funds’ (monetary donations) are widespread in the ‘Christian World’, how can you effectively discern what ‘ministries’ should receive some of your financial gifts?**
- 6. What ‘right’ does God have to ask you to surrender to Him all your ‘resources’ (i.e., your body, mind, and spirit, as well as your time and talents and treasures)? (Note Acts 17: 24-28; I Corinthians 6: 19-20) Is it your ‘strong conviction’ that (because you are the product of God’s special creation and because you are the object of God’s special love since Christ’s blood redeemed your soul) you do not belong to yourself but that you belong solely to God? How does such a sense of God’s ‘ownership’ of you, change the way you view yourself and your relationship to God and to other persons?**
- 7. From your own life (or from your observation of the life of someone whom you know well) share an illustration which demonstrates the truth of the following statement: “Little is much when God is in it!”**

- 8. As a serious ‘financial steward’ (i.e., a sincere follower of the generous Christ) how do you personally decide how much of your total financial resources you will give to God’s Kingdom Work?**
- 9. What are some of the ‘serious consequences’ when a Christian fails to share his ‘lunch’ (i.e., his time and talents and treasures) with other persons?**
- 10. Is it Biblically-accurate (and practically-true) to say that “God will never allow those who are willing to give to be hungry while others are fed”? (Note John 6: 1-14; 2 Corinthians 8: 12-15)**
- 11. In view of the overwhelming human hurts and needs of the multitudes of the world’s population (similar to the overwhelming needs of the hungry crowd in John 6: 1-14), do you sometimes feel that your ‘little lunch’ (i.e., your limited human resources) is ‘insignificant’ and ‘inadequate’, and are you ever tempted to withhold your ‘lunch’ (resources) with the hope that ‘others’ will give their greater resources in place of your small resources? Why is it a “contradiction in terms” to speak of “a spectator Christian”?**
- 12. Share an example from your own life (or from the life of a fellow believer) when God used your ‘small gift’ to bring multiplied blessings to many persons (similar to the ‘miracle’ of God’s multiplication of the child’s lunch in the story as recorded in John 6: 1-14).**
- 13. Is it Scripturally sound to say that, regardless of the number or the size of one’s talents, God will fully reward each believer who surrenders his all to Christ and who seeks to serve Christ wholeheartedly, and who sincerely loves his fellow men? Is there any service - even a seemingly insignificant service - which a believer performs in the ‘name of Christ’ which will go unrewarded? (Note Matthew 10: 42) Do you sincerely believe the following statement? - “Little is much if God is in it!”**
- 14. According to the Bible, what is the ‘basis’ of one’s contentment in life? (Note Hebrews 13: 5; Philippians 4: 11-13; I Timothy 6: 6-8)**
- 15. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “There are two ways to be wealthy - one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants. In taking the latter way to be wealthy you transfer to the inside of you the real wealth that cannot be taken away by depression or death.”**

- 16. Share the three principles which John Wesley believed should guide every Christian in the use of his money, and share how you would attempt practically to apply these principles in your own personal life.**
- 17. Tell what is meant by the statement: “Money is a useful ‘servant’ but a cruel ‘master’.”**
- 18. Share how you have confronted (and overcome) the temptation to become ‘greedy’ in the midst of a materialistically-orientated world, and share what it means to you to live a ‘simple lifestyle’ of loving service.**
- 19. List several of the many ‘benefits’ to generous giving.**
- 20. What does it mean for you (a committed follower of Christ) to “keep a light hold on material things”?**
- 21. Tell if you agree or disagree with the following statements: “The one who is most generous with his money is the one who finds most joy in giving. The more one gives, the more one develops a capacity to give.”**
- 22. Give your interpretation (and application) of the following famous quotation: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” (Jim Elliott)**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ENCOMPASS 'DIMENSIONS' OF TOTAL STEWARDSHIP**

Ephesians 5: 15-21

### THE STEWARDSHIP OF TIME

A person has no control over the time in history in which he is born. God has a purpose for every age and for every person, and God gives each person a limited number of years to fulfill his distinctive mission in the unique age in which he lives. Because life is so short, you must make your life ‘count’ for God! Someone wisely said: “Only one life; it will soon be gone; only what we have done for Christ will last!” When you view time in the ‘light of eternity’, life takes on a new meaning and a great sense of urgency.

“I have only just a minute  
Just sixty seconds in it;  
Forced upon me - can’t refuse it,  
Didn’t seek it, didn’t choose it,  
I must suffer if I lose it,  
Give account if I abuse it;  
Just a tiny little minute,  
But eternity is in it.”

(Author Unknown)

Be diligent to make the most of your God-allotted time, to “use it with all economy”. The Christian must always view time as the gift of God, and earthly life as the “dressing room for heaven”. Time is brief: “*We are but dust, and our days are few and brief, like grass, like flowers, blown by the wind and gone forever.*” (Psalm 103: 14-16, Living Bible)

“When as a child, I laughed and wept,  
Time crept;  
When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,  
Time walked;  
When I became a full grown man,  
Time ran;  
When older still I daily grew,  
Time flew;  
Soon I shall find in traveling on  
Time gone.”

(Author Unknown)

Time is one of the greatest gifts that man has received from God, and yet this gift is abused and misused perhaps more than any other gift. A disciplined Christian has firm convictions of how his time should be used, and he realizes that his times are in God’s hands. He knows that whatever he does, or wherever he is, he must do all things to the

glory of God. Someday he must give an accounting to God for the use of his time.

**“Loving Father, ‘my times are in Thy Hands whatever they may be, pleasing or painful, sad or glad, as best may seem to Thee.’”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** *Despite all the difficulties of these days, I desire to make the best use of my time!* (Ephesians 5: 16)

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

Romans 14: 7-12

### THE STEWARDSHIP OF INFLUENCE

**Influence is that intangible communication of an idea or personally trait from one person to another, with a result in a change of behavior or a change in a way of thinking. When you throw a large rock in the middle of a lake, the ripple from the impact of the rock sometimes reaches to the very edge of the lake. You never know how far reaching your influence may go in touching the lives of other people! You have a responsibility to use your influence for good and for God. The spread of Christianity depends largely upon how influential Christians are. If enough Christians can exert a strong enough influence for Christ, the world can be saved. Everyone is exerting an influence on someone. No one is an island to himself. One’s words and actions are either ‘building up’ or ‘tearing down’ another person! Jesus recognized the power of good influence when he said, “Ye (Christians) are the salt of the earth.” In other words, the world has been preserved from total destruction because of the goodly influence of godly persons.**

**Words are important, but words that are not ‘backed’ by godly actions, lose their power to influence or to persuade. For instance, one who declares that he believes in racial equality and then goes out and discriminates against a member of a racial minority group, obviously will be wasting his words. There is a popular saying: “Your actions speak so loud that I cannot hear your words.” In fact, at times the only effective way to influence another is through actions, not words. Wrote Peter to Christian wives who were married to non-Christian husbands: *“Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”* (I Peter 3: 1) The influence which loving action has on an unsaved husband is more powerful than the influence which debate and persuasive tactics have on an unsaved husband. The parent who teaches by example, as well as by precept, is the most effective parent. Words are important and powerful to influence, but words must be coupled with loving actions. Children are probably shaped more by the silent attitudes of their parents, lived before them daily, than they are by the words of instruction which their parents give. Words and actions must be coupled together if either is to be truly effective.**

**As a steward of God you are responsible for the way you use your influence. Your influence may be one of the greatest powers you will ever possess. Will your words and actions lead others to fruitful living or to futile living? Will others be the better or the worse for having known and associated with you? Are you leading people to Christ or away from Christ?**

***‘Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.’* (Psalm 19: 14) Then, as a result, my life will be magnanimous and winsome and, like filings that are drawn to a magnet, others will**

**be drawn to me and eventually to You, O blessed Christ, whom I love and serve.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I want to help shape the lives of everyone around me, for good, by the words I speak and by the way I act and react.**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

Philippians 2: 12-26

### HOW POWERFUL IS YOUR ‘INFLUENCE’?

By your words and by your actions you can powerfully influence others to ‘consider the claims of Christ’, leading eventually to their salvation!! This is also true regarding your prayers for the ‘lost ones’. Frank Laubach believed that prayer is the most powerful influence in the world! He said, “If you pray for a man a thousand miles away, his unconscious mind may at that very moment be attuned outward toward you. If so, he will get your prayer and that may start in him a desire for God. Desire is what tunes men into God. If you thus help turn a man toward God, you perform the service of a telephone operator, you connect the man with God. That helps God to speak to him directly.” How powerful is your influence for God, through your ‘life of prayer’?

It is most exciting to realize that your influence for God can live on, long after you have died! Of Abel (in the Old Testament) it is recorded, “*though he died, by faith he is still speaking.*” (Hebrews 11: 4b) Doubtless, all of us are being influenced in our decision-making and personal behavior by someone who has already died! My grandmother (a godly lady) died in 1971 at the age of 89. I was 27 years old at the time of her death. I spent much time with her when I was a child and youth. She still ‘lives on’ because of her influence in my life. Her quiet trust in God, her faithfulness in church attendance, her good humor in the face of her many adversities, have influenced me in my outlook on life. She being dead, yet speaketh - to me. Remember, what you do today may influence your great-grandchildren!

“An old man traveling a lone highway,  
Came at the evening cold and gray,  
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.  
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,  
For the sullen stream had no fear for him,  
But he turned when safe on the other side  
And builded a bridge to span the tide.  
“Old Man”, cried a fellow pilgrim near,  
“You’re wasting your time in building here.  
Your journey will end with the closing day.  
You never again will pass this way.  
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide,  
Why build you this bridge at eventide?”  
The builder lifted his old gray head:  
“Good friend, in the path I have come”, he said  
There followeth after me today  
A youth whose feet must pass this way,  
This stream which has been as naught to me,

**To that fair-haired youth may pitfall be.  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building that bridge for him.”  
(Will Dromboole)**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

2 Corinthians 2: 14-17

**INFLUENCING OTHERS - INCENSE OR INSENSITIVITY?**

*And through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him (2 Corinthians 2: 14, NIV)*

There is scarcely a moment in our lives that we are not influencing others. Blaise Pascal said, “The least movement is of important to all nature. The entire ocean is affected by a pebble.” Just so, in the ocean of life, our influence moves on as it is picked up, spreading from person to person and from generation to generation. Preacher John Donne said it tersely: “No man is an island.”

Our daily lives exude fragrance much like a vase of lilacs on the dining-room table discharges an aura through the entire house. When I was employed eight-to-five, entering my home after work could greatly affect my tired body and mind, either adversely or delightfully. What a pick-up it was, on those days the cleaning lady had come and done her magic! I’d stop and inhale the fresh, clean smell of toilet bowl cleanser, furniture polish, and just plain soap and water. It infused my whole weary being with hope and pleasure. Just so, the influence of our lives.

Walking down crowded grocery store aisles, my olfactory equipment is assaulted by an assortment of wafting aromas - and I don’t mean the heady smell of fresh coffee. The aggressive attack of alcohol, tobacco breath, and other secondhand aromas punctuate the air as certain people pass. I skip what I want from that aisle and hurry away.

The next aisle draws me close to the unpleasant odor of unattended human anatomy. The smell may not be as malicious as it seems, but the message it sends is a lack of consideration for others. I feel violated by this exposure that is emphasized by scanty attire.

In the next aisle I chance to meet an acquaintance who has taken the time and care to be clean, pleasant smelling, and properly clothed. I stop to chat, for his spirit conveys the same pleasant aura.

Our lives send forth waves of influence that are picked up much like the aromas that attack our noses. The “fragrance” will attract others to join our victorious procession, or will repel them.

We who are made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ, renewed by His Spirit, may go forth and spread the sweet fragrance of His triumphal grace to a hurting world. This requires a holy sincerity. Anything less - selfish motives, wrong attitudes – will be picked up by those around us.

**On the other hand, those who are repelled by the aroma of Christ that emanates from truly holy lives, have a spiritual cold in the head that distorts the fragrance, making it unpleasant to them (*“To the one we are the smell of death, to the other, the fragrance of life”*. 2 Corinthians 2: 16) To God the emanation is sweet incense ascending from clean, Spirit-filled vessels.**

**“Lord Jesus, make the essence of my life that which will draw others to you, revealing your goodness, your holiness, your love. Because there is nothing good in me, renew the aroma of yourself in me as I am faithful in daily prayer, devotion, and worship of you.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will imitate him who “gave himself up, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” (From Ephesians 5: 1 and 2)**

**- Nina E. Beegle -**

**NOTES:**

Mark 6: 31-32; 10: 13-16

### **TAKE TIME FOR LEISURE AND RECREATION!**

It is almost certainly only a legend, but it has truth in it to ponder. The story is told of a man who came upon the Apostle John (the disciple whom Jesus deeply loved) and found this beloved follower of the Lord playing with a ‘bow and arrow’. “What!” said the man to John, “you are spending your time playing rather than meditating on the Scriptures and serving humanity!” Said John to the man, “What would happen to the strength and the power of the bow string if it were always stretched and tense and were never released?” “Well,” said the man to John, “I suppose the bow string would lose some of its power and its ability to send the arrow.” “Yes,” said John, “and all study and all service without periods of play, causes one to lose strength and effectiveness in that study and service. The bow string must sometimes be released.”

Someone wisely said, “A strained piety is a dangerous piety.” Holiness and joy are not contradictory but compatible. ‘All work and no play’ makes a Christian strained and stressful.

It is important that one guard against ‘workaholism’. Yes, laziness and indolence must be avoided like the ‘plague’ but so must ‘workaholism’. As in so many areas of life, there must be a ‘balance’ between work and play in life. Be sure to take time aside for play. Bear cubs and tiger kittens play. Children play. Healthy adults play too - whether ‘touch football’ or table games. Play should be to the Christian life what dessert is to a good meal. Every family should play together - for this draws the whole family together. It is true that the family that prays together and the family that plays together is the family that will likely ‘stay together’. One caution: Don’t get too involved in ‘spectator sports’; rather, get involved in play together as a family.

Laughter is ‘therapeutic’. The Bible says: “*A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.*” (Proverbs 17: 22) Says E. Stanley Jones: “There are three levels of laughter: the lowest level, the one who laughs only at his own jokes; a little higher, the one who laughs at the jokes of others; third, the one who can laugh at himself. I would add as the highest, the one who laughs at the rhythm of things - a constitutionally happy laugh.” Someone asked the sainted Rufus Moseley, “Did Jesus ever laugh?” And Rufus replied, “Well, I don’t know, but he certainly fixed me up so I could laugh.” When Jesus took up the children in his arms to ‘bless’ them (Mark 20:13-16), I think He surely must have spent a little time laughing and playing with them. Jesus was serious-minded, but He was not somber and sour. In some of Jesus’ parables, one can discern a ‘sense of humor’ (how could the crowd not laugh when Jesus talked about the Pharisees ‘straining at nats and swallowing camels’?). And remember, even Jesus needed at times to leave the crowds to be alone with his dearest friends (Mark 6: 31-32). Everyone needs time for re-creation!

**“Joyful Christ, give me a ‘holy hilarity’ that is most contagious.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My countenance will ‘give away’ the joy I feel in my heart!**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

1 Corinthians 6: 14-20; Romans 6: 11-18

### STEWARDSHIP OF YOUR BODY

**Wrote Paul, “*Sexual sin is never right: our bodies were not made for that, but for the Lord, and the Lord wants to fill your bodies with Himself...Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts and members of Christ?...Haven’t you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you, and that He lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it.*” (Portions of 1 Corinthians 6, Living Bible)**

**Suppose someone gave you a beautiful car to USE. It is not your’s to abuse, but it is your responsibility to take good care of it - to use it appropriately. God gave you the body that you call your own. It is a gift, on ‘loan’ to you. To abuse your body with sexual immorality is a great sin! Wrote Paul, “*Run from sex sin. No other sin affects the body as this one does. When you sin this sin it is against your own body.*” (1 Corinthians 6: 18)**

**If your body is created by God to be used for God, then allow God to use your body for His glory. If you have surrendered your body to Jesus Christ, then you will endeavor to take care of your body. You will honor God by keeping your body physically strong, healthy, and pure. You will not use your body as an instrument or tool of wickedness, but you will use your body as a tool of righteousness (Romans 6: 11-18). You will not destroy your own body (suicide), and you will have no part in destroying the bodies of other people (murder, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia). You will not abuse your body with harmful drugs, alcohol, tobacco. You will not engage in illicit sex. You will rest properly and eat nutritious foods. You will actively exercise the body’s muscles including the heart and the lungs. You will see your body as a tool in God’s hands to use throughout your lifetime for God’s honor. You will build your body’s resistance against disease, and avoid ‘junk foods’ that tear down your body’s ability to endure.**

**Notes one author about the importance of keeping physically fit: “Your physical condition directly affects how you feel mentally. By achieving physical fitness an individual can engage in a lifestyle that produces health and happiness. Being physically fit gives us the qualities important for living the good life. It generates creative energy. Willpower. And personal discipline...Scientific evidence has shown a strong similarity between the changes normally associated with aging and those caused by inactivity...Chronic diseases (heart disease, cancer, diabetes) have a direct correlation with our lifestyle.” (Vibrant Life; pg. 17)**

**“Father, I thank you that I am ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’. Help me to be a ‘fit vessel’ for the sacred indwelling of your blessed Holy Spirit.”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: If I don't 'keep in touch' with my body (through proper health practices), then eventually my body will get 'in touch' with me (through physical illness and disease)!**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

I Corinthians 6: 19-20; I Timothy 4: 8

### BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL EXERCISE

**Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D. is one of the world’s leading experts on physical health and fitness. This best-selling Christian author made ‘Aerobics’ a household word. Several years ago, he founded a medical facility that offers comprehensive physical evaluation, counseling, and recommendations for attaining and maintaining healthy lifestyles. Nearly 30 million copies of his several books have been distributed throughout the world, motivating many to begin a disciplined regime of daily exercise. Through research, he has shown that physical fitness helps overcome multiple diseases, including diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. Vigorous (fast) walking for at least one-half hour each day will greatly increase one’s chances that he/she will live longer, feel better (increased energy level), and look better (weight control).**

**In his journal, John Wesley reveals his ‘secret formula’ for his long and healthy life. He believed it was because of several things: (1) “The power of God, fitting me for the work to which I am called”; (2) “The prayers of His children”; (3) “To my constant exercise and change of air...to my never having lost a night’s sleep...to my having constantly, for about sixty years, risen at four in the morning...to my constant preaching at five in the morning, for above fifty years...to my having had so little pain in my life, and so little sorrow, or anxious care.”**

**If you wish to be physically fit, you must eat properly, sleep well, manage stress effectively (through prayer and by trusting God in all things), and regularly exercise. My older brother has been a ‘good example’ for me in many areas, not the least of which is in the area of physical exercise. Even though he suffered great pain (in his feet particularly) for many years, as a result of being inflicted with polio when he was only eight years old, he has nevertheless overcome his physical disabilities and has become an active mountain climber. Among the many mountains he has climbed (many of them over 14,000 feet) is Long’s Peak (in Rocky Mountain National Park). Just this last summer, he climbed it for the eighth time (when he was 61 years old)! Ironically, it was my brother who encouraged me (many years ago) to increase my distance in running from one mile to four miles! My son-in-law, who never enjoyed running when he was a teenager, now runs at least 40 miles each week (and he lost over 50 pounds as a result of proper eating and disciplined running)! He has greatly increased his ‘speed’, and is a ‘strong competitor’ in many races! Amazing results! For many years, I have run 4 miles most mornings. Benefits to me? Relieves my stress, builds my muscles, enables me to breathe more deeply, increases my energy level, improves the quality of my sleep, improves my mental sharpness, provides opportunity for me to pray and to plan and to worship my Lord while enjoying the beauty of nature.**

**“Father, renew me daily in my mind, body, and spirit. Help me to do ‘my part’ in this ‘renewal process’. The I shall be a ‘fit vessel’ for the indwelling Holy Spirit!”**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will “add life to my years” as well as “add years to my life” - by vigorous physical exercise!**

**- Ron Christian -**

**NOTES:**

**QUESTIONS**

- 1. Why should a Christian view his earthly life as the “dressing room for heaven”?**
- 2. What does Psalm 103: 14-16 teach regarding time and man’s earthly life?**
- 3. According to Ephesians 5: 16, what should the Christian’s attitude be regarding his God-allotted time on earth?**
- 4. Is there any way that you can measure the extent and degree of your personal influence on other persons?**
- 5. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “One who declares that he believes in racial equality and then goes out and discriminates against a member of a racial minority group, obviously will be wasting his words.”**
- 6. What advice does Peter give to Christian women who are married to a non-Christian husband, according to I Peter 3: 1?**
- 7. Have you seriously considered using the words of Psalm 19:14 as your ‘daily prayer’ (as many ‘great Christians’ have done throughout the centuries of the Christian Church)?**
- 8. Do you personally believe that earnest and believing (Christ-centered) praying is the most powerful influence in the world?**
- 9. Are you personally and presently being influenced in your decision-making and personal behavior by someone who has already died? (Remember, what you do today may influence your great-grandchildren someday!)**
- 10. According to 2 Corinthians 2: 15-16, what are the two different responses of people who become aware of the ‘fragrance’ of your life as a follower of Christ?**
- 11. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “All study and all service without periods of play and recreation, causes one to lose strength and effectiveness in that study and service.” Give your interpretation (and application) of the following statement: “A strained piety is a dangerous piety.”**
- 12. Share from your own personal experience how you have learned to ‘strike a balance’ between work and play in your Christian life. When do you regularly (daily or weekly) take time ‘to play’? Share the kind of ‘play’ which genuinely**

**re-creates and rejuvenates you, such that you are more effective in your Christian service as a result of your ‘play’. Share your comments (i.e., explanation) of the following statement: “Play should be to the Christian life what dessert is to a good meal.”**

- 13. Tell why you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “The family that prays together and the family that plays together, is the family that will likely ‘stay together’.”**
- 14. Is it possible for a Christian to be serious-minded and, at the same time, joy-filled and good-humored (instead of somber and sour in his attitudes and words and countenance)? According to Proverbs 17: 22, what are the benefits of having a ‘cheerful heart’?**
- 15. According to I Corinthians 6: 18, why is sexual immorality considered to be such a serious sin?**
- 16. Practically-speaking, how does a Christian, who believes in the ‘stewardship of the body’, treat his body? (Note I Corinthians 6: 14-20; Romans 6: 11-18)**
- 17. Share your personal response (or reaction) to the following statements: “Scientific evidence has shown a strong similarity between the changes normally associated with aging and those caused by inactivity. Chronic diseases (heart disease, cancer, diabetes) have a direct correlation with our lifestyle.”**
- 18. Tell how the following statement has changed (or will change) your personal lifestyle (in terms of ‘physical fitness’): “Scientific research has shown that vigorous (fast) walking for at least one-half hour each day will greatly increase one’s chances that he/she will live longer, feel better (increased energy level), and look better (weight control).”**