

Stewardship Moments-

Dr. Frank S. Page

Many years ago, an elderly preacher came before his church during a building program. He said, "I have some good news and some bad news." First, let me share with you the good news. The good news is that we have more than enough money for our building needs as well as our ongoing budget and ministry needs. Then after a pause he said, now let me share with you the bad news. The bad news is that the money is still in your pockets!

That humorous story has great truth imbedded in it. We often complain that if all of God's people tithed, there would be no need for special offerings or even building fund campaigns. We would have more than enough money to build every building we needed as well as do all the missions and ministry work requested by our Lord. Obviously, this is what He intended as He gave us His instructions on how to do ministry. Reality shows us that is not the way it is. Therefore we have to ask ourselves as individuals, "What can we do to help God's cause?" There are times we may have to pick up the slack of others. Reality is that we cannot out give God, and we will be doubly blessed as we give more and more to Him!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help us to be people who are faithful in giving with the right kind of motive and the right amount to you. We need your direction. We need your forgiveness. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Almost everyone in our culture at least recognizes the phrase John 3:16. Most believers know that scripture by heart. It is probably the most known and one of the most well loved of all Bible verses. It speaks of God's gracious giving nature. We desperately need Christians to put that simple verse into practice as we learn to give. "For God so loved that He gave" shows the obvious result of a loving heart. As God's people, let us pray for our love to increase so that the obvious result will be a giving pattern in finance, love, and ministry.

: Prayer *Dear Lord, help us that we might follow Your example as You are the Great Giver. Please increase our love for the lost world as well as for believers in need. Because You have first loved us, You have given us the motivation as well as the example. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Many years ago, I was serving a church in Georgia. As we attempted to raise a substantial amount of money for a new building facility, a little child sent me a note via the offering plate. In the note he said that if we would take up an offering for God, everybody would want to give. I wish that little boy's spirit and heart were found among all believers! How we need a childlike faith and trust that God's people will do what they need to do! The Lord calls each one of us to a personal time of soul searching as to our obedience, spirit, and motivation in financial stewardship. Are we giving what we should? Are we giving with the spirit that we need to give? Are we praying for the multiplication of those gifts as we ought? Do we see all of our gifts as an offering for God?

Prayer: *May we see every expression of giving as an expression of love to You. Forgive us for holding back, for giving with less than joyful spirits, and for thinking that money belonged to us in the first place! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Who does it belong to anyway? One of the most often asked questions to me as a pastor is, "Does the Bible require me to give my tithe to my local church or do I have the freedom to give it where I would wish?" I believe that the Bible teaches storehouse giving (Malachi 3:10). I also believe that God leads us to give offerings to many wonderful Christian causes beyond our own local church. The issue that underlies all this discussion is who owns the tithe? If the money belongs to us, we can feel free to give it anywhere we would wish. If the money belongs to Him, then He needs to be the one to direct where it goes. I believe His Word makes the recipient of giving clear.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Give us a desire to support the local church as You have commanded in Your Scripture. The storehouse needs to be the place where we bring our tithe and pray that the local church will use them wisely for the glory and expansion of Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

George Barna, one of the most often quoted statisticians in our land recently reported that tithing to ministry has dropped by 62% in the last year, from 8% in 2001 to just 3% of adults during 2002. What a tragedy! If that kind of statistic continues, much Christian work will cease to be supported. While statistics can change, they give a sometimes frightening glimpse into the reality of people's hearts. How could that many people simply disregard God's call and command? We live in an extremely self-centered world. May God free us from our self-centeredness and materialism and see the blessings that come when we give as He has commanded!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Please forgive me if I have stolen from You. Break my heart and help me to regain obedience in this very important area of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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