

Stewardship Moments-

Rev. Brad Willis

People go through three conversions in the Christian faith: their head, their heart, and their pocketbook. Unfortunately, they are not all at the same time.” – Martin Luther

Our income represents our lives in that we must work for a particular wage. The Lord only asks for a portion to be set aside for Him. How do we feel when we have been shortchanged at the store when we make a purchase? Do we feel like we have been wronged in some way? Sure we do. We work hard for our money and we become angry if someone tries to take advantage of us. Truly, the Lord gives us strength and favor so that we can provide for our families. Without Him, we would have nothing. There are those who are robbing God, and there are those who are short-changing Him, and finally there are those who are obedient stewards. Which one do you choose to be?

Mark 12:41-44: *And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and observed how the people put money into the treasury: and many that were rich put in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites (small copper coins), which amount to a cent. And he called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, “Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow has put more in, than all those which have put into the treasury: For all they did put in of their abundance; but she out of her poverty put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”*

Many times we find it very easy to be good stewards when we have a windfall and are blessed in some way financially. On this particular occasion Jesus had taken His disciples to the temple to teach them a valuable lesson. They had seen many people give out of their abundance, but Jesus pointed out the widow who gave out of her poverty. His statement “she out of her poverty put in all that she owned, even all she had to live on” was the lesson of the day. Do you think it would be a wonderful thing to be used as an example by Jesus Christ to teach His disciples about being a good steward and about giving? Surely, this widow was blessed beyond measure for giving of all of her substance. Let us follow her example and the example of Christ and be willing to give our all. Are you willing to be an example for Christ?

Proverbs 11:24-25: One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes (waters) will himself be refreshed (watered).

Is Our Church an Individual Entity? We as Southern Baptist believe in Cooperation. We believe in working together for the common goal of the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ. That is why we have the Cooperative Program. In like manner, we also believe in the autonomy of the local congregation. Contained in this belief is the fact that each congregation is an individual entity. If this is indeed true, then each church, as a corporate body, needs to tithe. How can we declare the truth of tithing to the congregation if a portion of what is given by the congregation is not set aside as a tithe. The best place for that tithe for Southern Baptist Churches is the Cooperative Program and our local associations. May we as individual Southern Baptist Church “*consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works*” as we seek to be obedient to the Word of God.

Leviticus 27:30: *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.*

Offering Plate or Tithing Plate? There is no sight more stirring to me than a Baptist preacher with a Bible in his hand, ready to challenge the church with the word of God. The only other sight that may be more moving than that, might possibly be a Baptist preacher with an *Offering Plate* in his hand, ready to challenge the church in the area of giving. But is that an *Offering Plate* or a *Tithing Plate*?

Like the tabernacle in the wilderness, our church buildings today are filled with things that we use in worship. Today we have the pulpit from which announcements are made, songs are led, and the gospel is proclaimed. We have the pews or chairs where worshipers can be seated in comfort as they gather together. We have hymnbooks, chorus books, or screens with the words to songs or outlines to sermons projected so we can follow along. We even have what we call “Pew Bibles” for the convenience of those who may be visiting in our worship service. We also have an important implement in the worship service that carries a name that has become a detriment to its use. We call this implement an *Offering Plate*.

The *Offering Plate's* name should be changed to the *Tithing Plate*. An offering and a tithe are indeed two different things. The offering comes from our own free will by giving what we have decided to give. The tithe is given out of obedience to a directive from God. The tithe takes the precedent because it is the “first fruits” of our substance. If we continue to call the plate we pass around in worship the *Offering Plate*, we are telling the congregation to give whatever they think they should give. If we pass the *Tithing Plate*, we are telling the congregation to give what the Lord requires from each of us. Let's change the name of the *Offering Plate* to the *Tithing Plate*.

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