

Stewardship Moments-

Rev. Fred Stone

Recent statistics reveal that Southern Baptist families give only about 2.5% of their income to their churches. When confronted with the Biblical command requiring the giving of a tithe, many Christians will counter, "I can't afford to tithe. I can't pay everything I owe as it is now." For many Christians, that is a statement of fact. But it is not an acceptable statement for a faithful Christian to make. A more appropriate way to describe the situation is that the individual cannot continue to live the lifestyle he presently lives and give a tithe. Some changes need to take place in the way he manages his money.

Several years ago, I witnessed a young couple make such a change in their lives. They were new Christians who were serious about obeying God in every area of their lives. Without discussing it with anyone, they decided to sell their home and buy a less expensive one. One of their reasons was to get themselves in the financial condition where they could tithe.

Some people would object and say, "That's going too far. That's being an extremist." But that couple would tell you, "No, that's just being obedient."

Prayer: *"Father, you gave your Son as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Help us to be willing to make whatever sacrifice necessary to be obedient to you. Amen."*

Giving has nothing to do with assets; it has everything to do with attitude. Some of the greatest givers are people with the least to give, as Jesus pointed out in the story of the widow's offering in Luke 21:1-4.

My grandparents never had high paying jobs. They lived in a very modest home and had very few material things. I didn't realize how little worldly wealth they had until I became an older teenager. The reason why I didn't notice was because they were two of the most generous, self-giving people I have ever known. They gave of themselves and they gave of what they had.

I remember when their church building burned they gave for many years to help pay for the new building. They also gave whenever anyone in the community was in need. And they were always giving to their family members.

My grandparents are gone now. But they are not forgotten. And one of the ways they are remembered is as givers. They gave what they had.

How will you be remembered when you are gone? Will people remember you as a person who was generous and self-giving? Or, will people remember you as stingy and selfish?

Remember: giving has nothing to do with assets; it has everything to do with attitude.

Prayer: *“Father, thank you for the self-giving attitude You demonstrated in sending Your Son into the world to save us. Help us to develop that same attitude as we give back to You, and to others. Amen.”*

A Christian businessman was traveling in Korea and noticed in a field beside the road a young man pulling a crude plow while an old man held the handles. The businessman was amused and took a picture of the scene. “That is curious. I suppose these people are very poor,” he said to the missionary who was his interpreter and guide.

“Yes,” replied the missionary, “those men happen to be Christians. When their church was being built, they were eager to give something toward it; but they had no money. So they decided to sell their one and only ox and give the proceeds to the church. This spring, they are pulling the plow themselves.”

The businessman was silent for some moments. Then he said, “That must have been a real sacrifice.” “They did not call it that,” said the missionary. “They, rather, thought it was fortunate they had an ox to sell.”

When the businessman returned home, he took the picture to his pastor and told him about it. And then he said this: “I want to double my giving to the church and do some plow work. Up until now, I have never given God anything that involved real sacrifice.”

Have you ever given, sacrificially, of your time, talent, or treasure to God? We have all probably sacrificed for ourselves and, maybe, our families. But have you ever sacrificed for the glory of God, the reaching of the lost, and the advancement of His kingdom?

Prayer: *“Father, you have blessed us here in the USA with so much wealth. Most of us have never made a real sacrifice for your Kingdom’s work. Help us to get out of our comfort zones and be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to advance your Kingdom locally and globally. Amen.”*

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A pastor shared an experience that happened after he had preached his first sermon on tithing. A man came up and gripped his hand and said, "Everything you said is true. We cannot out-give God. He just blesses and blesses." That man had gripped the pastor's hand left-handed. Why? Because his right arm had been chewed off all the way into his shoulder by a hay baler. That same year, lightning had ripped away half of his kitchen. And there he was praising God!

There is something about that one-armed man praising God that cannot carry a price tag. His arm was gone but not his hope, not his love, nor his gratitude.

Does it pay to tithe? Few of us keep score. But we know it costs not to tithe. It costs contentment of soul, for one thing. The people in the church to be pitied are not those who give God his tenth, do their share, and struggle to make ends meet; it is those who steal from God, have plenty to spare, and yet cannot buy what the faithful possess -- contentment of soul.

Prayer: *"Father, you have given us your peace that transcends all understanding in the depths of our souls. Help us to so trust and obey you that, no matter what difficulties may come our way, we may continue to experience that peace and contentment within our souls. Amen."*

Taken From a Sermon by John Maxwell

In the story of the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10:25-37**, three attitudes about life, and giving, are demonstrated by the characters in the story.

Attitude #1: What's Yours Is Mine And I'm Going to Take It (v.30).

This was the attitude of the robbers. It was an attitude of greed. Obviously, none of us wants to be associated with this attitude because it demonstrates a total lack of love and absolute selfishness. While most of us would not like to think of ourselves in such a category, we must not be too quick to dismiss the possibility that we could have a similar attitude.

Scripture reveals that we are stewards (or managers) of what we have, and not really owners. The truth is that God owns everything. We are managers of what God puts into our care.

Are you looking at what you have from the perspective of an owner or a steward? A steward will feel grateful for what he has; an owner will feel pride. A steward will want to please the owner with what he has; an owner will only be concerned about pleasing himself.

If you think more like an owner, then spiritually, you are more like the robbers in this story. Your attitude is, "What's God's is mine and I am going to take it." Putting it like that, we see how dangerous it is to have such an attitude. It's no better than the attitude of a common thief.

Attitude # 2: What's Mine is Mine and I am Going to Keep It (vv.31-32).

This was the attitude of the Priest and the Levite. They were religious leaders in the community. Another way to describe their attitude is they didn't want to get involved. They had the attitude, "We don't need anyone. We take care of ourselves. Don't bother us and we won't bother you."

We can have such an attitude, but it's wrong. The truth is, we need others. Think about how dependent you are on others every day: someone built your house; grew the food you eat; made the clothes you wear; etc. Everything we enjoy today comes directly or indirectly from God. And God often gives His blessings through others.

Life won't work with the attitude, "What's mine is mine and I am going to keep it." We need what others do for us. And, others need us.

Attitude # 3 What's Mine is Yours and I'm Going to Give It (vv.33-35)

This was the attitude of the Samaritan. He gave of himself — his time, energy, and money. He had a self-giving attitude.

Notice the similarities between the Priest, Levite, and Samaritan: They all saw the same problem — a man in need. They all had something else to do — they were traveling.

But only the Samaritan got involved and met the need.

Some people say they would like to give, but they can't. They say they don't have the time, the resources, the ability, etc. But that's not true. Our giving is not based on our time, our possessions, or our ability. Our giving is based on our attitude.

All of us are busy. And we all have limited resources and abilities. Such things are not reasons for not giving; they are excuses. People who help other people do so because they have the attitude that people are more important than things. We don't know where the Priest, Levite, and the Samaritan were going that day. But we know the Samaritan thought helping a person in need was more important than getting to his destination on time.

Attitude is really the determining factor in whether or not we will be faithful stewards. We need to develop the attitude toward both God and others: "What's mine is yours and I'll gladly give it."

Prayer: *"Father, help us not to blame our selfishness on a lack of time or resources. Help us to understand that it is our attitudes that determine how generous or stingy we are. Please enable us to develop the attitude of the Good Samaritan: 'What's mine is yours and I'll gladly give it.' Amen."*

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