

CHRISTIANS AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

THE VIEW OF THIS CHURCH ON GIVING

We believe the Bible teaches that every area of life is to be given over to God. This includes Jesus being Lord over our finances and possessions.

Somebody once said that you can tell more about a person's spiritual life by looking at their checkbook than by any other indicator. Since we trade the totality of our life (time, energy, emotion and intelligence) for money, we cannot say we have given our lives over to God if He doesn't control our finances, possessions and purchases.

As a church, we trust that God will move His people to give in obedience and in response to believing prayer. We look only to God to meet the material needs of the church. We believe that this policy is a testimony to God's faithfulness and His ability to meet every need. Therefore, we do not solicit funds, make appeals or pass a plate in our meetings. We have provided offering boxes in areas where services are held to receive people's contributions to God's work. We trust God to move people's hearts to be obedient, joyful and willing givers.

We believe that this position does not lessen a believer's responsibility to give to God and the work of His church, but stands as convincing proof that God hears prayer and that it is safe to trust Him at all times.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STEWARDSHIP

The dictionary defines a steward as, "One who manages another's property, finances, or other affairs."

The purpose of the "Parable of the Talents" that Jesus tells in Matthew 25 is to teach about stewardship. A key feature of this parable is accountability. There is a day of reckoning when the master examines each servant to determine how faithful he has been as a steward. The goal of the steward, therefore, is not some type of success as measured in human terms, but rather faithfulness. (1 Corinthians 4:2). In the parable, faithfulness means putting our God-given resources, time, abilities and opportunities to their best possible use.

Paul also makes it quite clear that a day of reckoning awaits Christians regarding their stewardship of the things with which they have been entrusted (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). The purpose of the judgment seat of Jesus Christ is to assess the believer's faithfulness as a steward (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10-12). It does not concern the judgment of sin or whether or not he will make it into heaven since "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). This truth of the judgment seat of Christ acts as a sobering warning to believers to be faithful stewards. It also encourages us to be good stewards in a positive way as well, since rewards are promised to those who are faithful.

CHRISTIANS AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS (continued)

The Bible teaches the following about finances and giving:

- ♦ Believers are expected to give according to their ability. (Luke 12:48; Acts 11:29).
- ♦ Believers are expected to give regularly. This is demonstrated by the New Testament example of regular giving to meet a specific need (I Corinthians 16:2). This is only logical, since the financial needs of the local church are regular and continuous.
- ♦ The needs of those in full-time ministry are to be met by those to whom they minister (1 Timothy 5:1-18; 1 Corinthians 9:7-12).
- ♦ God is generous to those who are generous. This is a principle of harvest (2 Corinthians 9:6). Our attitude in giving is important.
- ♦ The tithe (10%) principle is the basic giving rate for God's people. This can be seen before the Law was given and after the Law was given (Malachi 3:10). Jesus did not criticize the giving of the tithe, only a hypocritical heart. Our tithe is to be brought into the storehouse (Malachi 3:8-12). The local church is the storehouse in our culture. The tithe is meant to supply the resources for the local church to accomplish its worldwide mission of making disciples, to support the ministry, and to care for those in need. God is just as concerned with how well we use the money we keep as with how much we give to His work. As a result, we need to analyze our purchases to see if they represent genuine needs and wise investments.

THINGS

The concept of stewardship implies that all we possess belongs to God. He has entrusted these things into our care temporarily to be used not only to meet our needs but also the needs of others. A good example is hospitality. When Christians recognize that their homes belong to God, then they use their homes to help those in need. (1 Peter 4:9). With other possessions, we are expected to lend or to give according to our ability to do so.

“Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Come back later; I’ll give it tomorrow.’” Proverbs 3:27-28

“If a person gets his attitude towards money straight, it will help straighten out every other area in their life.” - Billy Graham

“Christians need two conversions, one for their soul and one for their pocketbook.”

- Martin Luther

“Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” - John Wesley

“You can’t take it with you, but you can send it ahead.” - Steve Gregg