

STEWARDSHIP

“If I have but enough for myself and family, I am steward only for myself and them; if I have more, I am but a steward of that abundance for others.”

- George Herbert

Definition

What I do, with all that I have, after I say, “I believe.”

Using the gifts God has given us to do the work God is calling us to do.

Scripture

Everything is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1)

Who gives us power and wealth (Deuteronomy 8:17-18a).

Having enough and sharing abundantly (II Corinthians 9:6-15)

Background Information

Christian stewardship is grateful and responsible use of God's gifts in the light of God's purpose as revealed in Jesus Christ. Christian stewards, empowered by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves to conscious, purposeful decisions.

Stewardship is lived out in:

- sharing God in seeking justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in an interdependent universe;
- sharing the material resources we hold and giving them in service, justice, and compassion.

Both for the individual and for the community, stewardship is a joyful act for the sake of God's world.

Stewardship teaches that all that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. We are, therefore, stewards of God's gifts during our lifetime. Discerning and carrying out God's purpose is the primary purpose of our lives. The gifts we have been given, time, talent, and money, are to be used for that purpose. The primary role of the church is to guide individuals in discernment of the mission for their lives and use of their resources in accomplishing it.

Giving

Having enough is the number one issue that has to be settled for oneself; if you are to seriously consider whether you can give, much less give abundantly.

I believe this question of “do I have enough” is much harder for us to answer than it was for our fore-bearers. Take this statistic for instance: “Fifty years ago, Americans consumed half as many goods and services per person as we do today.

During the same amount of time the size of homes tripled. Every day, we buy more clothes, appliances, cars, books, televisions, computers and so forth simply because we can (and often when we can't). Some sociologists have named this prosperity to continually purchase and consume more 'affluenza'.

In some ways it is a sickness. For it often makes us feel bad due to long hours we work because of it, we tire more because we have to polish it, dust it, repair it, clean it, mow it, to name just a few. These things now require more of us, simply due to the fact we have acquired more (and in most cases, more than we need). It is a sickness because it causes us pain. Constantly yearning for something is like having hunger pangs that never seem to be satisfied. And if you have ever been that hungry, you know it becomes an all consuming thing, you can concentrate on nothing else.

Affluenza is a distraction. It keeps you focused on that which doesn't really matter. It takes your time, attention and resources including finances away from what really matters – people and relationships. I do not think it is an over-statement to say that affluenza is a life threatening condition.

One cannot really approach giving, without first setting a standard for when "enough is enough." I encourage and maybe the word is more accurately conveyed with, I "implore" you to make a list for yourself of the things you have and then decide in each category whether you have enough. For example, the list might include – clothes, shoes, handbags, electronic gadgets, music, books, tools, to name just a few. And if the answer is no, then I challenge you to write down how many more you need and then stick to that number in the next year. If the answer is yes, then I encourage you to think about how much you will save in the next year if you don't buy these things – and then give the money away, yes – I said give the money away. Why? Because I want you to have more joy in your life and I know that giving brings joy. It is a sure guarantee: give and you will have more joy.

Now onto the second element regarding giving which is distinctly mention in II Corinthians chapter 9: the issue of giving – scarcely or abundantly. Our lives are to be measured not against the world's standards, but by God's standards. So, the question becomes not how much I give, but rather am I giving bountifully, abundantly. Giving abundantly is when we determine what is enough and stick to that, then we all will be able to give abundantly.

Finding Ways to Give More Money Away

1. Look at the buying compulsions you have and refuse that compulsion and then use the money you would have spent on meeting your compulsion and

channel it into meeting another person's or group's need. I cannot name your compulsion, but when it comes to buying most of us have one type of thing we will buy, even though we don't need it, even when we already have enough of that item.

2. Do a yard sale or sell what you make or do as a hobby, or hit up a spare change jar, and donate it.

Resources

Enough: Contentment in An Age of Excess by Will Samson

Your Money: The Missing Manual by J.D. Roth