

TREASURES
IN HEAVEN

The abundant life
of stewardship

M. LUNN



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The Abundant Life of Stewardship

by

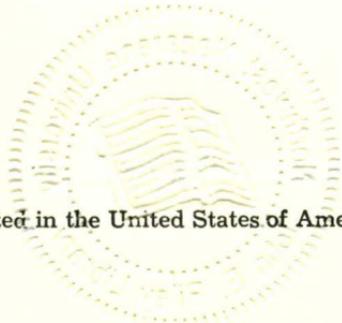
M. Lunn



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For Alma

Who through the lean years and
those of plenty has unfailingly
exemplified principles of steward-
ship in a life of selfless devotion
and dedicated service to her husband,
her seven children, and all within
reach of her eager ministry



INSTRUCTIONS FOR RECEIVING CHRISTIAN SERVICE TRAINING CREDIT

1. This is the text for the First Series Unit 113.1a, "Studies in Stewardship." Six fifty-minute sessions, or the equivalent in time, are required.
2. Your class should be registered with the general office at least three weeks before your first class session. This will allow time for the office to get the class report forms and individual registration slips to you. Also, it will help get texts on time.
3. Each pupil must be present for five of the six sessions and study the text to receive credit. Exceptions to this may be given only by permission from the general office.
4. Examinations are optional with the teacher.
5. Please send in the class report to the General Christian Service Training Office upon completion of the course.

*For further information consult your local
Christian Service Training director or write . . .*

CHRISTIAN SERVICE TRAINING
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City 31, Missouri

Introduction

It has been a pleasant and profitable experience to read this manuscript. The author, Dr. M. Lunn, reveals in his writing the spiritual insight which has been characteristic of him throughout his long years of service to the Church of the Nazarene as manager of the Publishing House. Therefore he does more than exhort his readers because God's law demands it. He proclaims a message of Christian stewardship with provocation for serious thought that leads to practical conclusions. These are reinforced with interesting and usable illustrations. For preachers and teachers, here is a treasury of quotable material.

This book will not produce legalistic tithers or duty-driven servants of the church. It makes love of God the inspiration for dedication, service, and sharing. It will discourage self-seeking performers and challenge all to know for themselves the thrill of laying up "treasures in heaven."

All the author recommends is made palatable and convincing by the knowledge that without ostentation Dr. Lunn has consistently practiced what he preaches for half a century.

—G. B. WILLIAMSON

Contents

	PAGE
I. You Are a Steward	17
II. Your Stewardship of Love	29
III. Your Stewardship of Time	41
IV. Your Stewardship of Talent	57
V. Your Stewardship of Money	71
VI. Weighed in the Balance	83
Bibliography	93

A Week's Meditations on Stewardship

Monday	Matt. 20: 1-16
Tuesday	Luke 12: 42-48
Wednesday	Luke 16: 1-13
Thursday	I Cor. 4: 1-2
Friday	I Pet. 4: 10
Saturday	I Cor. 6: 19-20
Sunday	Rom. 6: 11-13

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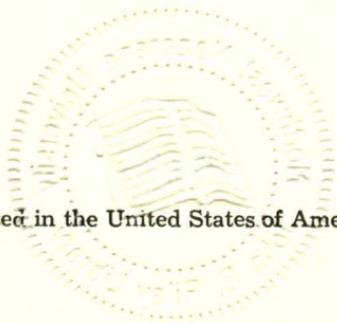
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LIFE'S STEWARDSHIP

*For any gift God gives to me I cannot pay;
Gifts are most mine when I most give them all away.
God's gifts are like His flowers which show their right
to stay
By giving all of their bloom and fragrance away.
Riches are not in gold or land, estates or marts;
The only wealth worth having is found in human hearts.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

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You Are a Steward

GOD CREATED YOU; HE HAS A CLAIM ON YOUR LIFE.

To the doctor man may be bones and tissue; to the teacher he may be brains and intellect; to the preacher he is an embodied soul; but to God he is "My image," a created being who may scale the heights or grovel in the dust.

The Psalmist exclaimed, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14).

Isaac Watts's hymn of worship based on the one hundredth psalm includes these majestic lines:

*His sovereign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay, and formed us men;
And, when like wandering sheep we strayed,
He brought us to His fold again.*

That is the story in capsule of creation and redemption.

Man was created in the image of God. Because you were thus created "a little lower than the angels," you can enjoy fellowship with God; you can be conscious of His presence, for God can become a reality to you. You can commune with Him and think God's thoughts after Him. You can work with Him and participate in the building of His kingdom on earth.

The first thing God did after creating man was to give him dominion over all things. That was the beginning of man's stewardship. He was taken into partnership with his Maker.

God's creative work goes on continually. It did not end with the epochal events recorded in Genesis. The world of nature is subject to His will. He gives life to every newborn soul. He sends the rain and sunshine on

the just and the unjust. The stars are placed and the planets are maintained in their orbits by His power. The very existence of the earth is in His keeping. When He gives the word the elements will melt with fervent heat. Should you not worship Him as the Creator and Sustainer of all life and the Provider of all your needs? What a sublime privilege to serve as a steward of such a great God!

In this age of scientific achievement it is so easy to assume that man himself is the creator of our amazing material welfare including all the gadgets and refinements which contribute to our pampered, luxurious, push-button living.

Man's ingenuity and skills have caused leaders of secular thought to encourage young people to believe that the progress of civilization and all advance in knowledge and material welfare are due to man's wisdom. That is but a surface conclusion. The first chapter of I Corinthians has some interesting things to say about man's wisdom which make it seem less impressive than many worldly God-rejecters would have us believe.

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent (I Cor. 1:19).

Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (I Cor. 1:20)

The world by wisdom knew not God (I Cor. 1:21).

God is still supreme both in wisdom and in power. He still rules the world. He is the Source of all that is worthwhile. Educate though we may and mechanize as we will, we need God. Augustine's confession applies to our modern situation as much as it did to his own time:

Thou hast made us for Thyself and the heart of man is restless until it finds rest in Thee.

Man was given dominion over the earth. His knowledge has increased until he can no longer handle it in his

own limited strength. The human race is in danger of extermination because of misdirected genius because man has not used his knowledge to promote the kingdom of Heaven, because he has not recognized his stewardship, his responsibility to God and his obligation to his fellow men. Man's increasing knowledge must be in subjection to God; if he goes his own way it will be his undoing.

In the beginning was God. In the end it will be God. And all the way between it must be God or poor, sinful, rebellious, self-sufficient man must suffer the consequences. God cannot be left out with impunity. God is supreme. God is Master. We are His stewards. Sublime privilege, awesome responsibility!

Because God created you He wants YOU. If He has you He will have all that you have. Many are willing to give God a part of their time, a tithe of their money, a portion of their talents. But they balk at giving God themselves. However, God isn't interested in partial commitments. He wants our all or nothing. The rich young ruler yearned for God's approval; but when Jesus asked for that which meant giving himself, he turned away.

Years ago in the First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia, a collection was taken following a missionary address. In one of the plates was a card. The pastor picked it up and found written on it, "Myself. John Lewis Shuck." That was the start of this young man's missionary career. He became the first Baptist missionary appointed to China, sailing for Hong Kong in 1835. If you would be God's steward you must give yourself.

CHRIST REDEEMED YOU; YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN.

God's redemptive program is to regenerate the heart of man and cleanse it from all unrighteousness. Only then will redeemed man, his rebellious heart surrendered and his peace made with God, restore what he has wrong-

fully acquired, love his fellow men as he loves himself, seek another's good, "do justly," and "love mercy," and "walk humbly" with his God (Micah 6:8). Inward transformation always ends in outward reform. The reverse is seldom, if ever, true.

Out of the muddle and misery caused by man's bungling sinfulness God is able to re-create order and righteousness and holiness. A creative act which only God can complete is this restoration to sonship, this transformation, this miracle of taking what sin has deformed and forming out of it what God has planned. For us, as Bertha Munro suggests, darkness is turned to light, discord becomes harmony, disproportion is redesigned into symmetry and beauty, barrenness springs into fruitfulness, and death gives way to the miracle of resurrection life.

This reconstruction or regeneration or "new creation" which is part of the redemptive process is illustrated by the caterpillar which spins a cocoon around itself and later emerges a gorgeous butterfly. That is transformation—an ugly worm crawling in the dust changed into a winged creature soaring into the sunlight with the rainbow mirrored on its wings.

So man was created in the image of God. Satan destroyed that image. Christ paid the price, bought man back, completed God's redemptive plan. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (I John 3:2).

What frustration if you had to stand mute in the presence of God! No communion. What confusion if you could not hear His directing voice! No guidance. What loneliness without His presence to assure and comfort! No fellowship. How pointless and trivial would all of life be if you could not work with Him! No stewardship. What frightening uncertainty would lurk in the impenetrable future without His promise! No hope.

Thank God for the truth in Fanny Crosby's immortal words:

*Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore.
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
Chords that are broken will vibrate once more.*

Having created man, God is always near, speaking to those who will hear, giving light for those who seek, and above all giving power to all who ask. God can come into our confused, messed-up, mishandled situations to change them, to overcome handicaps, to untangle snarls, to restore, to perform an enabling miracle so that man may walk the highway of holiness, in purity, love, devotion, and selfless service. Such is the abundant life of stewardship.

Yes, you belong to God by creation. He created you an immortal being, designed to live forever with Him. You have the ability to reason, to choose, to serve Him, to disobey and defy Him if you choose. If you choose to be a materialist and live for self and the things of time and sense, you may. You have the power to make chaos and confusion of your life. May God give us strength and wisdom to choose Him.

Choose you must. God drafts no followers. Enrollment in God's kingdom is by choice. If you choose riches, position, popularity, pleasure, you may realize your ambition. But Jesus admonishes: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:31). The Master also said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). You cannot have dual allegiances, grasping the things of God in one hand and reaching for the baubles of this world with the other. Mammon means more than money; it means all material things, riches, honors, easy living, anything that we count more essential than God.

The choice you make today may shape your life and your destiny through eternity. Dr. William Temple, archbishop of Canterbury, warned the university students of England to be careful in making the right choices in life. He warned them not to be misled by false showiness. He wrote: "The world is as a shop window, which some mischievous person has entered and shifted all the price labels around, so that the cheap things have the high price tags and the really precious things are marked low." Be careful to choose from God's vantage point. Bear in mind that God does not run a bargain counter.

The highest privilege accorded mortal man is to serve as an ambassador of God. Such a person has serious responsibilities, the chief of which is acting as a messenger of reconciliation. The big news of redemption is that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." And now God has committed unto us this ministry. Each one of us can say to those who are away from God and perhaps at enmity with God, "Be ye reconciled to God." The longest life would be too short to exhaust the possibilities of such an exalted assignment.

CONSECRATION IS YOUR "REASONABLE SERVICE."

You are to be a steward, a willing, dedicated co-worker. Not an automaton, not a spiritual robot, but a redeemed man or woman, with physical powers, intellectual faculties, and an immortal soul irrevocably committed to God, to serve Him and a lost world as He directs.

Dr. P. F. Bresee's classic utterance expresses the true motivation of all stewardship outreach. "We are debtors to every man to give him the gospel in the same measure as we have received it."

Stewardship is the abundant life. Self-centered living is dwarfed, ingrown, barren, futile. The dedicated life of surrendered self is the expanding life; the full, rich,

serene life of outgoing interest, compassion, and love. It is the normal, wholesome, balanced life with no inner conflicts, no cross-purposes, no double-mindedness. It is the integrated life where the physical, intellectual, and spiritual man unite in building a personality that shall honor God and bless the world.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, world-famous for his medical missionary work in Lambarene, Africa, says that a strong sense of obligation to God and his fellow men was responsible for his renunciation of a life of comfort and prestige and acclaim. He has written: "I cannot accept life's happiness as a matter of course, I must give something in return." There is no worthwhile stewardship without a compulsive sense of indebtedness to those less fortunately situated than ourselves.

You were created to be a steward, a fellow worker with God, an individual entrusted with God's bounty. As a redeemed soul the only reason for your being here is that you might represent God, that you might demonstrate to a gainsaying world the living miracle of a human being absorbed in the welfare of others and quite unconcerned with your own rights and interests.

Martin Luther's ambition as a young man was to become a lawyer. While he was a student at Erfurt a lightning flash in the forest of Thuringia startled him into sober thinking of his need of God. He gave up his legal aspirations and entered the Augustinian Convent.

SANCTIFICATION IS GOD'S DYNAMIC FOR FRUITFUL LIVING.

An unsanctified person cannot qualify for stewardship in the fullest meaning of the word. The first step toward sanctification is commitment. That also is the basic requirement of stewardship. An uncommitted Christian is torn between two loyalties—God and self. A double-minded person is unstable, undependable, unre-

liable. A good steward is set apart, dedicated, given over to his Creator.

Holiness is the integrating experience. It ties personality traits together into a harmonious whole. It unites the various and variant propensities and tendencies into one unified attitude. It enables you to use your talents to the full for God's glory alone.

In the sanctified life Christ-life predominates over self-life. In the terminology of Christian experience sanctification denotes self-abandonment. And the committed life is the only life of true stewardship. It is the only life that God can use. The progression is from a sinner with all of self and none of God to a converted, justified state with some of self and some of God. The final stage is that of holiness, sanctification, where self is displaced and God fills your soul, your life, your thoughts, your spending, your giving. That is the beginning of the abundant life of stewardship.

In summation, there can be no real stewardship without sanctification, which embraces complete submission to God. Stewardship is the right relationship of man to God; it is a divine partnership. And God cannot be in full partnership with anyone who has sin in his heart and who is not wholly set apart for service.

LIVING IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO GLORIFY GOD.

Living is indeed your opportunity for service and the only one you will have.

*Work, for the night is coming
When man's work is done.*

This is a sobering thought. There is so much to be done and so little time in which to do it! So much need to be relieved, so much wrong to be righted, so much suffering to be alleviated, so much destitution to be provided for, so much hurt to be healed, so many lost souls to be won!

A faithful steward ministers in all these fields. Stewardship isn't confined to a good accounting of our money. It means serving as representatives of God, ministering as emissaries of Christ, wherever and whenever someone needs help of any kind.

There is no place in God's plan of stewardship for complacency, for self-satisfaction. That easygoing attitude, that willingness to let well enough alone, is the curse of present-day nominal Christianity. Don't make the mistake of succumbing to it.

A testimonial dinner was given for a man who had amassed a fortune in the manufacturing field. He was known far and wide for his rigid standards of honesty and fair play. Also he had endeared himself to thousands by his generous gifts to hospitals, schools, and charitable institutions. After a number of his friends had spoken in glowing terms of his sterling character and widespread philanthropies he arose and thanked the speakers for their kind words and the guests for their tributes. He said that he took no credit for his success nor for his fabulous gifts to worthy causes. In conclusion he said that all his life he had tried to be a faithful steward. He went on to say that one motivation had governed his business and religious life: "I have held nothing back from God."

That testimony embodies the basic spirit of stewardship. God doesn't judge a man by the amount of his accomplishments. Each person is weighed in the balance of what he has been given and how he invests that portion. This is strikingly illustrated in the parable of the talents. The servant who was given one talent was condemned for burying it instead of putting it to the best possible use.

Martin Luther wisely said, "No tree bears fruit for its own use; everything in God's will gives itself." Living is your opportunity—your opportunity to live largely by helping others to live as they might with your encouragement, your opportunity to multiply yourself by influenc-

ing other lives for better things. This is putting your talents to increase. Such a life of stewardship requires dedication, planning, self-examination. Remember the words of Plato, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

Resolve now to make your life an unobstructed channel for the love, compassion, and mercy of God. Far too many lives are "clogged by the silt of self." If you will yield yourself fully to God, the Lord will use your life as a stream of blessing to create oases in the barren wastes of sin. *This is your stewardship!*

Summary

God created you. Whether or not you acknowledge it, as one of His creatures you belong to Him. God created you in His own image. At least part of that image was lost in the fall of Adam and Eve. But you still have self-determination. The Son of God died to restore in you that image of God. If you have accepted Christ's sacrificial offering you are redeemed, "bought with a price." Now you have the same interests as God, you reflect His character and spirit, you carry out His purpose for your life. You are God's agent, emissary, representative, ambassador, partner. You are God's steward.

In your stewardship, your commitment, you follow the example of our Lord. "He died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon [consider] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:10-11, 13).

Questions for Discussion

1. How may stewardship be related to the truth that God created us?

2. Differentiate between belonging to God as one of His creatures and becoming children of God through the redemption of Christ.

3. In what sense is consecration inseparable from full Christian living?

4. How is sanctification related to the life of stewardship?

5. Comment on stewardship as affording the opportunity for real, full, and glorious living.

Love feels no burden, regards not labors, would willingly do more than it is able, pleads not impossibilities, because it feels sure that it can and may do all things.

Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and strong; patient, faithful, prudent, longsuffering, manly and never seeking itself; it is circumspect, humble and upright; sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet and guarded in all its senses.

THOMAS A KEMPIS

II

Your Stewardship of Love

Love is *the* important word in the divine vocabulary. It pictures for us the essential character of God. "God is love" (I John 4:16). To love God is the first requirement made of man. And the second is like unto it, we must love our fellow men.

What is divine love? An attempt to analyze it is almost like dissecting a flower to learn the secret of its beauty and fragrance. Well does the poet say,

*The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.¹*

It is to be deplored that the word love is so often associated with the ideas of sentiment and romanticism. Divine love is of much sterner quality. It is better demonstrated than defined. Love which doesn't eventuate in action is spurious. In God's love for us there is redemptive power, forgiveness of sin, restoration. God's gift of His Son was motivated by love.

In our love for God there is involved the commitment of our all, the submission of our wills, the centering of our affections. If we love Him we worship and adore Him, we fear and obey Him. By the same token, if we love our neighbor we seek his best interests, we serve him, we respect his personality. We have a God-given concern for his salvation and for his well-being.

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So if we profess to love God and our fellow men we must prove it by our deeds. Anything else is mere sentiment. Sentiment can wear a pleasing cloak of piety but it carries no burdens, exercises no self-discipline, demonstrates no self-forgetfulness, endures no hardships. Love does all of these. Divine love has a blanketing, inclusive quality affecting our relationship with God and with others.

How can anyone contemplate the love of God for any length of time and fail to exult with Charles Wesley:

*"Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!"*

In our consideration of the stewardship of love we are particularly interested in the meaning and scope of love for our fellow men. Here love is a living, glowing, active good will, with creative power. Love with its resultant concern seeks and works for right human relationships. It even encompasses the well-being of enemies. This love for others has in it a divine power to redeem otherwise hopeless situations and to transform all our dealings with others. Jesus indeed commanded that we love one another. With His Spirit filling our hearts and ruling our lives we cannot do otherwise. John says that love is the test of religion and by that is meant our relationship with God (I John 4:20).

NEVER A DUTY, BUT ALWAYS A GLORIOUS OPPORTUNITY.

Love as related to our fellow men is not an irksome obligation. It is a sublime privilege, a sharing, a participation in the plan and purpose of God. Obeying the call of duty may be a noble endeavor but it also can be a wearisome grind. Love and all it entails in service for others is the highest form of stewardship. Never forget that stewardship is representing God, serving as His emissaries among men who ignore or defy Him.

Rev. J. P. Roberts of Pilot Point, Texas, devoted his life to helping the unfortunate. He loved erring, fallen humanity. At his funeral was a girl whom he had rescued from a life of sin. When word came of Brother Roberts' death she hitchhiked from Chicago to Texas in order to be at the funeral. Also there was a local colored man who did odd jobs at Rest Cottage. Chester stood at the casket, turning his tattered straw hat around and around as tears poured down his furrowed cheeks. As he turned to leave he was heard to say, "He was the onliest white man I ever loved."

The most glorious opportunity offered mortal man is to qualify as an ambassador of Almighty God in loving, serving, and winning others. It is an assignment that angels would accept with rejoicing but they are not eligible; it is the unique prerogative of redeemed human beings.

HOARDED IT DIES; SHARED IT MULTIPLIES.

Sharing is a key word in the lexicon of stewardship. Livingstone said that he considered nothing that he owned of any value except in relationship to God. What we hoard in money, talents, and love, we lose.

Self-centeredness is incompatible with good stewardship. Self-forgetfulness is the very life-breath of love. It isn't reasonable, it isn't *humanly* possible, but it is Christ-like to lose ourselves in the needs of others. Mary Bethune, the famous Negro educator, has well said: "It is only the self-less me that God can use."

It is said that an opal, known for its iridescent colors, if laid away in disuse loses its glow and becomes dull and lusterless. But worn on the person or held in the palm of the hand daily for several hours it soon begins to brighten and gleam again.

Love thrives on use; the more it is expended, the more it accumulates and multiplies. Love suppressed shrivels and dies. Love encouraged by action expands

and flourishes. Edwin Markham's poem "Outwitted" expresses so much truth:

*He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!*

Love stemming from the infinitely loving heart of God is without end. Until seventy times seven it forgives. The test of love is its endurance, the length to which it will go.

The love of God is without limit. It reaches to the most unlovely; it knows no barrier of race, color, class, or intellectual level. It plumbs the lowest depths and soars to the highest pinnacle.

Love surmounts the trifling irritations and annoyances arising from the intimate relations of home life. It spans oceans and continents yearning, praying, working, and giving for the salvation of the millions without God in faraway lands whom we shall never see. It leaves a radiant smile, a friendly word, a kindly admonition to the hundreds we meet in casual encounter, many of whom we shall never see again.

Sociology says, "Respect all humanity." Good, but not good enough. The unique command of Christ is that we *love* all men.

Sharing the Good News

"WITNESSES UNTO ME."

"Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8), is a directive and a mere statement of fact. Certainly it makes no provision for holdouts, leaves no place for exceptions, offers no alternative—"Ye *shall* be." And it is not a burdensome duty. If you had been cured of a malignant disease you wouldn't have to be forced to tell others of

the skill of your physician—"Unto *me*." Christ is to be exalted. Certainly you love and recommend your church, and if occasion arises you explain the doctrines of your denomination. But the emphasis is on Christ. He alone can save. His redemption alone can restore the sin-sick soul; His blood alone atones for sin.

LOVE IN ACTION.

People must be persuaded and won. Here is where love is so necessary. There are those who can argue religion and debate certain tenets of doctrine. Argument and disputation never convinced a sinner of the error of his way. Love in action will break down stubborn resistance. It will convince the skeptic and silence the scoffer. Some professing Christians are busy defending their religion when what real religion needs most of all is to be demonstrated.

Winning a soul requires not only love; it demands wisdom and tact and careful planning. "Wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). ". . . I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22). The spirit of love excludes all arrogance and embraces all humility in order to win souls. Stewardship shorn of self is the witness needed to win the world to Christ.

Love is the only guaranteed method of winning souls. Powerful preaching doesn't always convince. Beautiful music may leave a hungry soul unmoved; a personal testimony can be brushed aside. Love seldom fails. May we never fail in our love.

We must be careful lest in our cozy circle of church fellowship we lose our spirit of "outreach," our zeal for winning others for God and the Church. Dr. Ralph Earle tells the story of a woman (she surely must have been a good woman) who testified in prayer meeting, confessing that she was disturbed about the number of new

people coming into the church. She complained that things weren't as they used to be when they were a small group with such a nice, intimate, family spirit. It didn't feel the same with all these new people.

The very word "winning" suggests overcoming difficulties, countering with something of obvious worth. It is futile to attempt to win souls with a motivation of duty. Soul winning must be prompted by genuine interest, by a compulsion of love that will not rest while those around you are lost. Owen Hutchinson tells of a poor woman trying to bring up her children in the slum section of a large city. She was besieged by a professional visitor from a neighboring church. Finally, in exasperation and self-defense she wrote to the minister of that church and begged him to "stop Miss _____ saving her soul on me." A merely professional attitude in soul winning is easily recognized and always resented.²

In contrast to the foregoing let me cite a case of victory when defeat seemed inevitable. A member of the Church of the Nazarene brought her grandson to Sunday school. He was not vicious, but as an instigator of mischief and irreverence his qualifications were amazing. The superintendent, a model of goodness and patient forbearance, finally agreed that the boy must be asked to withdraw. The discipline of the class couldn't be sacrificed. But his teacher, with four boys of his own, decided to endure patiently for a few more weeks. Later this boy knelt at the altar, prayed through, and from then on was a normally behaved Christian teen-ager. He finished high school, completed college, and is now filling an important position in one of the largest business establishments of his home town. He married a girl from one of the best families in the church. To see him on any Sunday attending church with his attractive wife and adorable children

²Owen Hutchinson, *Christian Love in Everyday Living* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press).

you would never suspect that at one time he was on the "black list," slated for expulsion.

There's a postscript to that true story. The father became ill and the pastor called. The father was led to Christ and within a few weeks had gone to meet his God.

The most hopeless situation can be changed by persistent, redemptive, Christian love. The test of love is the length to which it will go and the extent to which it will endure.

SURROUND THEM WITH LOVE.

Here is where we need to face facts. We lose too many converts who have made a sincere start. A score of excuses are ready at tongue's tip; we say they refused to pay the price; they weren't in earnest; they yielded to an emotional urge, came forward, and that was the end. In some cases one of these reasons may apply. In many instances, however, new Christians fall away because we haven't been concerned enough to keep after them, to protect them with all the safeguards of personal interest and church association.

We are inclined to turn new converts loose to shift for themselves. This is a critical period in their experience. This is when they need the fellowship of the concerned. And by fellowship we mean the oversight, the encouragement, the tenderness, the tolerance that seasoned Christians owe to babes in Christ. This is part of the stewardship of love. *Surround them with love.* Charge the very atmosphere with it. Plan your strategy. A haphazard method will not do. Use paper and pencil for reminders. Send a friendly note through the mail. A brief phone call may turn the tide. Best of all are the firm handclasp and warm smile, the friendly inquiry and word of encouragement. Make the new convert feel that he belongs, that you believe in him, that you are counting on him, and most important of all, that you are praying for

him daily. The new convert is your brother or sister; treat him as such. He belongs to the family of Christ; make him feel it.

Some who heard Jesus turned away. Some in your church will yield to the siren call of the world and default. But make it tremendously difficult for anyone who has started to retract and fail. When a soul strays and finds his way back to a life of worldliness, the church should be able to say, "We did our best to hold him."

And when, oh, when will we learn to indoctrinate our converts, especially our young people, with the truth that, when they falter and stumble and even when they fall, they need not wait for the next revival to repent and seek God again? Why don't we by constant repetition instill into their consciousness that should they fall from grace they can immediately pick themselves up, ask God's forgiveness, pray for strength, and get right into step again?

Bearing One Another's Burdens

Divine love is not an abstract theory; it rises higher than beautiful sentiment; it surpasses philosophical ideals. It is a dynamic, healing outreach, an irresistible concern, a compulsion to participate in the woes of humanity in order to alleviate some of its suffering. Love is an irrepressible urge to share one's spiritual and material blessings with those less fortunately situated.

The late Dr. E. O. Chalfant was pastor of a church in Indiana when the flu epidemic struck the city. He asked his people to go into the homes of neighbors to care for the sick, to tend babies, scrub floors, wash dishes, prepare meals. He knew that a demonstration of Christianity in action would do more to win the townspeople to the church and to God than years of preaching.

It was a sense of stewardship that impelled Grenfell to give up a remunerative career as a physician to Lon-

don's elite and spend his life ministering to the fisherfolk of bleak, frozen Labrador.

Love is proved by deeds. That holds true in the African bushveld, on skid row, and on the street where you live.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren." If you have fed the hungry, offered a cup of cold water to the thirsty, clothed the naked, housed the stranger, you have ministered to Christ, you have loved.

A steward is charged with responsibility. The child of God has no greater obligation than to bear another's burden. To get under the load of a fellow Christian's trouble—in what more Christlike service can one be engaged? We may share not only Christ's compassion and love for the lost, but His shepherdlike care for the sheep of the fold. Nowhere is the principle of stewardship more applicable than in the challenge to care for weaker members of the group and to bear one another's burdens.

A church is a community of Christian people affiliated to share and partake in an interchange of experience, to strengthen and inspire one another in a common purpose: worshiping and serving God and evangelizing a lost world.

The humble in spirit are interested in helping others, in bearing the burdens of a weaker member. Humility doesn't boast of qualities that make for strength of character. Humility recognizes that none of us has anything which has not been received. Humility is a required attribute for one who wants to qualify as a good steward, for anyone who wishes to walk with God.

In the New Testament Church the members had love and concern for one another. The pagan world cried out in amazement, "How these Christians love one another!" Such love is the badge of discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one

to another" (John 13:35). Next to Spirit-anointed preaching nothing else will so quickly convince and convict the unsaved.

The psychologists have a word that is akin to the word sympathy but much more meaningful; it is empathy. It means to enter into the very feeling of another. Bible Christians were practicing that long before the psychologists started using it.

In a certain rural section of our country the people had an expression to signify their empathy with one who was bereaved or in deep trouble over some family tragedy. They said to one another, "We'll walk his furrows with him."

Jesus identified himself with the afflicted. Owen Hutchinson said: "When Jesus saw a leper there is a sense in which he became a leper. When he saw a blind man, he became blind. He was not trying to see leprosy through his own eyes; he was seeing leprosy through the leper's eyes. He was feeling what it is like to be a leper."⁸ When our love reaches that sublime height we are ready to WIN others to our Saviour.

The law of Christ is that you love your neighbor as yourself. You fulfill that law when you bear your brother's burdens.

*If any lift of mine may ease
The burden of another,
God give me love and care and strength
To help my ailing brother.*

—ANON.

Summary

Love is the indispensable ingredient of Christian faith and life. It speaks more convincingly than the soundest logic; it breaks down more barriers than the

⁸*Ibid.*

mightiest army; it quiets more criticism than a thousand excuses; it wins more souls than the most eloquent sermon. Love expresses itself in concern; not the concern of pity but that of sharing, of entering into the needs of another. Love is compulsive; it drives one beyond the bounds of ordinary care and interest into the realm of "unenforceable obligation."

Love is the motivation, the driving impulse of stewardship. Dr. George A. Buttrick calls love an essential possessed by too few members of the modern Church. He defines it as not dependent on being loved, or liked, or flattered; as not equated with sentimental feeling, but of unbreakable good will.

Love is never an arduous duty but a joyous opportunity. It cannot be hoarded or confined; it must be shared. It provides dynamic for witnessing, perseverance for winning, and wisdom for conserving.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is love the driving force in stewardship?
2. Is there a difference between love in action and love as mere sentiment or feeling?
3. How may love as compulsive concern for others be cultivated?
4. Why is witnessing so important in our land of an open Bible and religious freedom?
5. If someone is resentful of our testimony should we desist or should we continue witnessing?
6. What conspicuous trait of the Early Church impressed the onlookers?

REDEEMING THE TIME

*Redeem the time! God only knows
How soon our little life may close,
With all its pleasures and its woes.*

Redeem the time!

*Redeem the time, and that with might!
Far spent the day, quick falls the night;
Soon closed the race, and fought the fight.*

Redeem the time!

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

III

Your Stewardship of Time

Benjamin Franklin expressed a forceful axiom when he said:

*If thou lovest life then do not squander time;
For that is the stuff life is made of.*

Rare indeed is the person who is not guilty in some degree of wasting time. Many a dying man of wealth has offered his gold for a few more days of that precious commodity.

*I have only just a minute,
Only sixty seconds in it,
Forced upon me—can't refuse it,
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
But it's up to me to use it,
Give account if I abuse it;
Just a tiny little minute
But Eternity is in it.*

The thought of time as a sacred trust for which strict account must be given is not a new concept of stewardship. If you hear someone say, "My time is my own; I'll do with it as I please," that person couldn't be more wrong. Time is part of eternity; you have no promise of another hour. You take a reckless chance when you presume upon the uncertainty of time. A fellow church member once said: "An indelible impression was made upon my childhood mind when, as a lad, I heard a veteran saint of God testify that she daily prayed that the Lord would help her to live each fleeting moment as though it were her last."

Paul admonished the early Christians to redeem the time. By this he meant that they should "buy it up,"

make the "best use of" their time. Jesus himself recognized this principle of the stewardship of time. Speaking of the uncertain hour when the master would return from his journey, He said, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."

John Wesley was a man of boundless energy. He was up at the break of day to preach in the field to the workmen on their way to their day's toil. He read countless books during his many hours on horseback. One of his rules was, "Never be unemployed, never be triflingly employed." He kept busy himself and insisted that his preachers be industrious and crowd each hour with worthwhile endeavor.

While we are in the midst of it, time seems such a plentiful thing; it appears to have no end. There are things to be done, but relax; tomorrow's another day. George Bernard Shaw wrote, "No one of us has a blank in the pages of the Recording Angel." How tragically true! In doing nothing we do wrong. We write a condemning negation on today's record. We are so apt to think we have plenty of time. "We've time to burn." Sacrilegious phrase! While we are "killing time" the door may swing shut and opportunity end forever. You're the worst type of gambler when you take a chance on time. It is only a mark of sanity, leaving piety out of the discussion, when we heed Rudyard Kipling's suggestion, "Fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run."

Many of us live lives that are constricted. People crave the excitement and culture of extensive travel. They chafe under the restricting barrier of monotonous routine, of the ever-recurring daily grind. A critic said of the poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy that they "lived intensively rather than extensively." And what was so awful about that—living intensively in awareness of the beautiful in nature, in response to the

daily opportunities for service at one's doorstep? No day is drab, no duty irksome, no hour is boresome when God invests our lives with His power and glory. When our time is viewed as a stewardship, a commitment, a responsibility, every common bush is aflame with God and every opportunity for service a holy place where we worship Him as recipients of the grace given unto us.

DAILY DEVOTIONS DETERMINE YOUR DESTINY.

Men crowd God out of their busy lives. Well—at least they permit Him to be crowded out, and the result is the same. Neglect may not be as vicious a sin as positive wrongdoing, but it is as destructive in the end.

No one can deliberately hang the "No Admittance" sign on his heart's door, purposely keeping God out, and be any kind of Christian. But how often there is so little room left for God that He doesn't have a controlling voice in ordering our lives! The cares of business and family, ambition for material success, the tyranny of trivia, and the deadly devastation of physical and mental lethargy keep many Christians from emptying the heart and life of all else and making room for God to fill every part. When anyone becomes so involved in duties that he gives God the tag ends of his time he has become too busy. He has lost the vision of the stewardship of time.

Of course you are familiar with the hymn, disturbing in its penetrating quality—we don't sing it as much as we ought:

*Take time to be holy;
Speak oft with thy Lord.*

Right there is the secret of letting God fill our hearts and rule throughout our lives. Take time! You don't *find* time for devotions; you make a place for them. Harold A. Bosley defines devotion as "the conscious, habitual effort to look toward God. The period in our day when we

try to center our thoughts on God, when, through meditation and prayer, we approach Him in a deeply personal way."¹ The more strident and clamorous the din of the world about us, the more we need to seek seclusion in solitude and silence before God. Silent meditation is conducive to self-examination, to proper perspective, to keeping the strings of our souls attuned to heavenly harmony. The strings of a violin slacken because of disuse. They must be tuned, brought to concert pitch. Just so our souls get out of tune. Frequent seasons of meditation or silent communion when God talks to us are necessary to keep us in harmony with heaven.

Lewis Dunnington tells us:

Paderewski never allowed himself to go before an audience until he had spent at least half an hour in silence listening to eternal harmonies inaudible to the human ear. From that silent communion he would go to the platform as one walking in a dream, to play the piano as few men have ever played it. Once, when someone spoke to him between a dressing room and the stage, he turned around without a word and stalked back to his room for another half-hour of silence!²

We must have periods of devotion to get away from the distractions and the hubbub of life. If we are to amount to anything in the kingdom of God, we must have the touch of God in our lives—a touch that prods us to action and on occasion alerts us to "stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God" (Job 37:14).

Do you know what the Psalmist meant when he said, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Ps. 84:2)? If we love God we have a yearning (craving desire) to be with Him. We want to commune with Him

¹Harold A. Bosley, *Sermons on the Psalms* (New York: Harper & Brothers), p. 51.

²Lewis L. Dunnington, *Power to Become* (New York: Macmillan Company).

in prayer; we want Him to speak to us through His holy Word; we want to enjoy fellowship with Him. Why starve our souls in the midst of plenty? Why languish in invalidism when by our God we can break the ranks of His enemies and take a walled city (Ps. 18:29)? Why be spiritually impoverished when abundant life and untold riches of grace may be ours for the taking?

The Psalmist could teach us a great deal about devotions. In Ps. 46:10, we read: "Be still, and know that I am God." Contrast that admonition with preceding word pictures in that same psalm: "The waters roar," "the mountains shake," "the heathen raged." This is an age of action. We are told that one must be a "go-getter" in order to succeed. We think the race IS to the swift. We hustle from morning till night. We hurry through our meals, through our devotions (if we have them), to our work and we rush back home. We dash to church with little or no preparation. If we aren't dismissed on the minute we fuss and fret and complain. Life is a busy affair. The idler is left behind. But we pay too high a price if we let the pressure of business or pleasure crowd God out of our lives. A simple but challenging maxim is: "Better run into heaven bareheaded and barefooted than to miss it on account of anything in this world."

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). That is God's way, and if it conflicts with the ways of the world, the world must be wrong. Quietness and confidence are not had by rushing to and fro but through habitual, patient waiting upon God. Do take time for God; you cannot afford to do otherwise.

"All of the troubles of life come upon us because we refuse to sit quietly for a while each day." So wrote a devout Frenchman. If you haven't practiced this rewarding habit, begin it today. Set aside a definite time each day for "meditation in the stillness." It will return rich dividends to your spiritual life.

FAMILY WORSHIP, A SOLID FOUNDATION.

The foundations of our country are laid, not in the halls of Congress, but in the homes of our nation. We are not overlooking the Church. In many instances the influence of the church is sadly counteracted by home situations, even among those who profess a high state of grace. The hourly and constant atmosphere of home life is difficult to combat by outside pressure. And that is true when that outside pressure is bad as well as when it is good.

The proper home is a unit of security, of protection. It is a unit of education especially in religion, morals, character, and culture. The home is the one place where children receive their first impressions and subsequent developing concepts of life's values.

The influence of the home in developing a proper concept of stewardship is illustrated by this quotation from John Baillie:

My earliest memories have a definite religious atmosphere . . . I cannot recall a time when I did not already feel, in some dim way, that I was "not my own" to do with as I pleased, but was claimed by a higher power which had authority over me . . . For, as far back as I can remember anything, I was somehow aware that my parents lived under the same kind of authority as that which, through them, was communicated to me. They too behaved as though they, even they, were not their own.³

The spiritual atmosphere of a home cannot be healthful and invigorating without family worship. There should be a systematic arrangement for reading the Bible, prayer, perhaps singing of hymns, and reading from a devotional book or periodical. The pattern of such family worship may change from month to month. Also its schedule and make-up may vary in different homes. The

³John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Scribner and Oxford University Press).

details are not as important as the regular observance of the family altar. For suggestions on establishing and conducting a family altar send to the Nazarene Publishing House for the *Family Outreach Packet*. Also be sure to read chapter eleven in *This Holy Estate*, by John E. Riley.

The Bible places the husband and father as head of the household. He is the priest, charged with the responsibility of the spiritual interests of his domain. The spiritual nature of our children and the religious atmosphere of our homes must be cultivated and not left to chance. No other one thing will be more effective in accomplishing this desired end than a regular season of family worship around a home altar. Earl C. Wolf's tract *Your Family Altar Is Important*, which is included in the *Family Outreach Packet*, lists twelve convincing reasons for a family altar.

- I. It unifies the family and sweetens home life.
- II. It cultivates the Christian graces and relieves tension and misunderstanding that sometimes threaten the fellowship of the home.
- III. It aids our boys and girls in becoming Christians and helps them to develop ideals that guide them in vital Christian living.
- IV. It yields spiritual resources for daily tasks and assists us in cultivating dependence upon God.
- V. It strengthens us in the face of adversities and disappointments and enables us to trust Christ implicitly in all of life's circumstances.
- VI. It makes us conscious during the day of the abiding presence of our Saviour and Friend.
- VII. It bears a Christian witness to the guests in our home.
- VIII. It undergirds the Christian teaching of the Sunday school and the ministry of the church.

- IX. It affords opportunity for the Christian family to pray for and to sharpen its concern for non-Christian families.
- X. It helps us to give a right place to spiritual values and saves us from an undue concern for the temporal things of life.
- XI. It encourages us to put Christianity into practice in our homes.
- XII. It honors God and provides an excellent outlet for the expression of our gratitude for the abundance of daily mercies and blessings which come from Him.

Where there are teen-agers, regular periods of family devotions may not be easy to arrange. Conflicting schedules as well as interests can present difficult hurdles. But they can be cleared. It may require parental firmness but that isn't amiss in any well-regulated home.

Elizabeth B. Jones in her book *Together with God* has some helpful suggestion for family worship. (It is published by the Nazarene Publishing House.)

WHY DO I GO TO CHURCH?

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts his readers that they must not neglect to meet together as some habitually do (Heb. 10:25). Were it not for the second clause in that sentence one would think that the admonition was uncalled for. But apparently even in the Early Church some of the members were not faithful in attendance. Dr. Verkuyl in the Berkeley Version of the New Testament appends an interesting footnote to this scripture: "Quitting one local church to attend another, thus being helpful in none."⁴

A professing Christian must have lost all his sense of stewardship when he absents himself from the services

⁴The Berkeley Version in Modern English. Copyright 1958, 1959, Zondervan Publishing House. Used by permission.

of the church of his choice except for worthwhile reasons. One may be limited in accomplishments, but the least gifted of all can be a high scorer in faithfulness.

The reason for laxness in church attendance perhaps can be explained by the example of an old Lancashire woman, dreadfully crippled with rheumatism, who used to hobble to church on two improvised crutches. Each trip was accomplished with utmost effort and pain. A friend asked how she managed to be so faithful in her attendance. The answer was, "My heart gets there first, and my old legs follow on after."

If our hearts are not in church attendance it will be easy to find excuses for staying away. To all such we would suggest earnest seeking for the spirit and attitude of the Psalmist, who cried out, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 122:1). As we do with so many of the good things in our lives, we take the church for granted. We've always known it was there, there for us to take or leave. Were we deprived of its blessing, we should value it more highly.

America was built upon the church. If we maintain the structure erected through the years with so much sacrifice and perseverance, we must keep intact the foundation which is the Church. Going to church provides a window with a view of eternity which saves life from the cramped, the mean, and the petty. Also it saves us from the ever-present temptation to plan and build as though we were to be on this earth forever.

Why Do I Go to Church?

I go to church—

- ✓ To have God made more real. To be made more conscious of His presence. Without Him how lonely life would be!

- ✓ To be made more acutely sensitive to His voice. How quickly I would go astray without His guidance!
- ✓ To have my vision sharpened. Everywhere there are burning bushes aflame with God. Only if I clearly see will I step aside, take off my shoes, and worship on holy ground.
- ✓ To have my concern reactivated. I need to be constantly alerted to the needs of those around me—the lost ones who are tired of sin and weary for the rest that only God can give. And there are those about to fall by the wayside and need a supporting hand.
- ✓ To have my sense of values readjusted. I must continually be reminded that the things which are seen are temporal and the things which are not seen are eternal. People spend their lives building mansions when there is scarcely time to pitch a tent.
- ✓ To have the strings of my soul tuned to faith, reverence, patience, goodness. The strings of the soul, as the strings of any instrument, become slack from disuse and grow less vibrant. The sermon, the hymns, the fellowship, the Bible study—all of these bring them back to true pitch again.
- ✓ Thank God for my church!

I'm so glad that I don't have to get along without it.

I go to church for the meaning it gives to life, the significance it gives to suffering and to injustice of every kind. It gives me an assurance that God's payday does not come every Saturday.

YOUR CHURCH NEEDS YOU; YOU NEED THE CHURCH.

It is one thing to go to church and another to get under the load, to accept responsibility, to help carry

the burdens. There is only one Sunday school superintendent in a local church but there are dozens of teachers, and many assistants to keep records, order and receive supplies. Without these faithful ones who work behind the scenes, whose names are unknown to most of the congregation, the Sunday school could not continue.

Two women were discussing another. Said one, "Does Agnes belong to the church?"

The reply, "No, Agnes belongs to herself and that's it."

If you are waiting for your superior talents to be recognized—and until they are, you refuse to accept minor offices—let me suggest that you get your Bible and turn to Rom. 12:10; John 13:14-17; I Pet. 5:5.

YOUR LIFE ENRICHED THROUGH SERVICE TO OTHERS.

The self-centered soul is of all persons most pitiable. In the days of horses and carriages there was a rather common conveyance known as a sulky. It was so called because it had a seat large enough for only one person. It is said that the sulky was first made for a man who did not want to share his seat with another; he wanted it all to himself. So many persons with limitless possibilities for lives of blessing and usefulness live a "sulky" existence.

Henry Drummond has well described such a self-enamored person in the following lines:

*He lives for himself, and thinks for himself
Of himself and none beside;
Just as if Jesus had never lived
And as if he had never died.*

How tragically hemmed in must be the feeling of a soul bounded on the north, south, east, and west by himself! Conversely, how adventurous the life that is

on the lookout for others, forgetful of prerogatives and his own rights and comforts! The normal life must have outlets, channels through which streams of love, interest, sympathy, and uplift may be directed to alleviate the suffering and needs of the unfortunate.

Two lakes in Palestine offer examples of this truth. Both are fed from the same stream, the river Jordan. Both have similar settings, blue water and towering mountains in the background. But there the similarity ends. The Sea of Galilee is a thing of beauty, not only in appearance, but in the life it supports. Fish swim in its depths; ships ply its surface; its shores are verdant with vegetation; thriving villages dot the surrounding areas. The Dead Sea is a thing of death. No fish live in its bitter waters; no grass and flowers beautify its banks; no human habitations enliven its environs. What makes this striking difference? The Sea of Galilee receives in abundance and gives in like manner. The Dead Sea takes in an equal amount but keeps what it gets. It has no outlet, so its waters turn bitter and instead of blessing turn to blight.

If you feel your interest in others lagging, go to the Word of God, where you will find help for this difficulty. Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech* translates Phil. 2:3-4: "Let every one regard the rest as being of more account than himself; each fixing his attention, not simply on his own interests, but also on those of others."⁵

At the seashore a little girl stepped on a crab. Her mother asked whether it was alive. The child answered, "It is nearly alive." Could that possibly describe the spiritual state of some who profess to love God? Christ came to give us abundant life. When the pulse beat of a church is low and the reactions of its members to the

⁵The *Weymouth New Testament in Modern Speech*. Copyright, Harper and Brothers. Used by permission.

impact of the world's needs is slow, then that church is "nearly alive."

WHO IS SO LOW

*Who is so low that I am not his brother?
Who is so high that I've no path to him?
Who is so poor I may not feel his hunger?
Who is so rich I may not pity him?*

*Who is so hurt I may not know his heartache?
Who sings for joy my heart may never share?
Who in God's heaven has passed beyond my
vision?
Who to hell's depths where I may never fare?*

*May none, then, call on me for understanding,
May none, then, turn to me for help in pain,
And drain alone his bitter cup of sorrow,
Or find he knocks upon my heart in vain.*

—S. RALPH HARLOW

Now will you join me in closing this chapter with a prayer: "Keep us out of easy places, O God, and out of selfish removing of ourselves from the needs of others. Amen."

Summary

Stewardship is trusteeship. We must give an account for what has been entrusted to us as stewards. Of such trusts none is more vital than time. Plato said, "Time is the image of eternity." That should mean that time is the stuff of which eternity is made. Sobering thought! The dedicated Christian gives God priority in the use of his time. Some pursuits he must pass up in favor of those ranking higher. There is so much to be done and so little time in which to do it! God's steward

takes time for private devotions, for family worship, for church attendance, for activities in the church's program, and for deeds of mercy, kindness, and service to others.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is it imperative that we make the best possible use of time?
2. Is time for devotions important and why must we take time for it?
3. What contribution does family worship make in establishing spiritual atmosphere in the home?
4. Why is faithful attendance at church services important in the life of stewardship?
5. Does stewardship imply a willingness to accept responsibility in the program of the church?

Yesterday is a cancelled check; tomorrow is a promissory note; today is the only cash you have—spend it wisely.

—*Stewardship Facts*

*Take my love; my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.*

—FRANCES R. HAVERGAL

THE ONE TALENT

*Hide not thy talent in the earth;
However small it be,
Its faithful use, its utmost worth,
God will require of thee.*

*The cup of water kindly given,
The widow's cheerful mites,
Are worthier in the eye of heaven
Than pride's most costly rites.*

*Go then, and strive to do thy part—
Though humble it may be;
The ready hand, the willing heart,
Are all heaven asks of thee.*

—WILLIAM CUTLER

IV

Your Stewardship of Talent

YOU HAVE TALENT; USE IT.

In New Testament times a talent was a piece of money. Jesus used this term to represent a power of mind or body committed to a person for use and improvement. So today talent means natural ability or aptitude. It signifies a capacity for achievement.

Talent differs in kind and quantity as much as do physical and personality traits. Talent is an endowment, something with which you are born. You are not responsible nor accountable for the talent, the natural ability, with which you begin but you are answerable to God for the use made of what has been given.

Stewardship is a recognition of and response to God's ownership of all you are and have—talent, personality, influence, time, money. Your talents, your natural and acquired abilities, must be placed in God's hands to be used at His direction. You cannot separate yourself from them. They are a part of you. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Guard what has been entrusted to you." It is to be held in trust, to be accounted for.

George Washington Carver, the famous Negro scientist, had the right concept of stewardship when he made this statement: "I discover nothing in my laboratory. If I come here of myself I am lost. But I can do all things through Christ. I am God's servant, His agent, for here God and I are alone. I am just the instrument through which He speaks, and I would be able to do more if I were to stay in closer touch with Him. With

my prayers I mix my labors, and sometimes God is pleased to bless the results."¹

God gives you nothing to hoard or to use for selfish purposes. All that you have been given is a commitment which you are under obligation to use for God's glory and the benefit of your fellow men. Every least endowment is a sacred responsibility. You may not dissipate what God has bestowed. And neither may you hide or withhold it, for your Heavenly Father has need of it.

Don't wait until you are better qualified, more experienced. Start now! And don't think that if you lived in another neighborhood or city, if you attended a different school, if your work was in another field, that you would be more useful and could do more with your talents. God wants to use you just where you are.

A policeman in Birmingham on becoming a Christian was so greatly troubled by the sights and sounds of sin among which he worked that for a long time he prayed, "Lord, take me out of the police service. Give me some other work."

Still no answer came and no other work was opened for him. At last he said to his wife: "I think we have been making a great mistake. We have been praying that I may be taken out of the force, and I begin to think that He has put me there to work. Now I am going to pray that He will help me to serve where I am."

That was the beginning of a life of marvelous usefulness. His influence over the men was so great that he was promoted to be the head of the detectives. He was instrumental in the salvation of many criminals. The place where God has put you is the place where you can do the best service for Him.

Many mistakenly think of stewardship only in relation to material things. Actually it penetrates into all

¹Holt Rackham, *George Washington Carver* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1943), p. 220.

sections and aspects of life. Compartmentalized religion is man's idea—or Satan's. It is widely practiced but popularity does not authenticate it.

Far too many professing Christians are striking reminders of Ezekiel's cake: burned on one side and underdone on the other; commendably strong at one point, woefully weak at another. The old proverb that termed consistency a jewel has yet to be proved wrong. It is altogether too rare a trait. Compartmentalized religion is a poor substitute for the real thing. One cannot obey God in one area of life and flout Him in another. One must have as much integrity in a business transaction as in upholding the doctrines of his faith. One must be as pious at home as in church. God will not be bought off with a concession at one point to make up for a rejection at another.

It is quite possible that many Christians hesitate, and some may balk, at the challenge of committing all their talents to an all-wise Creator. There comes to mind the case of Carrie Judd Montgomery, a talented, cultured young woman, religious in background and practice but not a committed Christian. She was laid low with nervous prostration, endured unspeakable suffering, and at times her life was despaired of. Friends who knew God in His fullness prayed for her spiritual and physical healing. The final step, made plain by the Holy Spirit, was that she must lay on the altar her special talent—she wrote beautiful poetry. It was a struggle, but she yielded and was immediately filled with the Spirit and restored physically. You've already guessed the outcome—she lived to write more poetry more beautifully than ever before. God knows all about our talents and how and where they can be used for His glory. If you haven't already done so, do not be afraid to commit your one talent or your ten talents to Him today.

THE LOVE OF GOD SHOULD CONSTRAIN YOU.

Attitudes are springboards for actions. An attitude is a controlling position, disposition, or manner. It is the inner you determining your course. Your attitude reflects your thinking. William James said, "As we think we travel." If you have reservations in your attitude toward your stewardship, your trusteeship, you will withhold some part of your money, your talents, your personality, your service. A faithful steward can say with assurance and in all humility, "I have held nothing back; I have done what I could."

A partially dedicated person stops to consider results rather than leaving them with God. A disposition of pride hinders many in their service for God. They feel that they cannot do as well as other more gifted persons. That may have some aspects of humility but underneath is a false pride that fears comparison with those of superior ability. The dedicated soul has

*No desire to be great or good or wise
In any but the Saviour's eyes.*

Not only is there no grading in the use of dedicated talents; there is no competition for first place. The Bible speaks strongly against seeking acclaim, honors, position. And it is insistent on stepping aside in favor of another. The selfless steward is never disturbed when another is selected for preferment. Envy and jealousy are not found in a Christian's file of attitudes. The sanctified heart isn't hurt, miffed, nor overly sensitive when not properly recognized or adequately praised.

Motivation is a basic factor in behavior. Everything we do or say of any consequence has some motivation behind it. Motive is that which prompts or impels a person to act. It is the incentive for action. Nothing can be of more importance than to make sure that your

motives are pure, untouched by any least taint of self-advancement or other outcroppings of carnality. Your control center must be purged of all self-interest if you are to serve "in the beauty of holiness."

It IS possible to have no higher purpose in life than to please God. One can know that his every act is rightly motivated. Paul charged the Corinthians in words that cannot be misinterpreted or misunderstood, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." That is singleness of purpose and purity of motive covering everything we may do or say. This is setting a high standard but not an iota higher than that established by the Word of God. Also we are discussing the practical working of a high and holy calling—Christian stewardship.

Jesus condemned the Pharisees because He saw that their motivation was not to glorify God but to get acclaim and honor for themselves. If one were to paraphrase the remarks of Jesus about these self-centered religionists, he might read, "Don't be overly concerned about them; they are getting what they seek, self-gratification and homage from the fickle crowd."

There was a story current a few years ago concerning Elihu Root. When President Theodore Roosevelt nominated Mr. Root as secretary of war, one of the latter's friends remonstrated with him. It was pointed out that by waiting three years he could well expect to run for the presidency. Mr. Root's reply was, "I have always thought that the opportunity to do something worthwhile should be a first consideration and trying to get something must always be secondary."

Dr. R. T. Williams, in his book *Relationships in Life*, emphasized the truth that our attitudes make success or failure of our lives. Religion is basically an attitude—toward God, toward others, toward ourselves, and in the final analysis toward life. If we take the attitude

of stewardship our relationship toward God will be that of accountability, our relationship toward others will be that of concern, our relationship toward ourselves will be that of discipline. Henry F. Lyte expressed this concept so beautifully in his hymn-poem:

*Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, and hoped, and known;
Yet how rich is my condition—
God and heaven are still my own!*

Blessed state of submission, of self-effacement, of stewardship!

The Holy Spirit invests each life and any vocation with dignity, responsibility, and opportunity. God has need of Christian bankers, shipping clerks, physicians, teachers, truck drivers, salesmen, homemakers.

Carey went from a cobbler's bench to the mission field. Dwight L. Moody stepped from a shoe salesman's position to the pulpit. Both men continued the interest which absorbed them while engaged in secular work. Moody's name became known throughout the Christian world. He became a ten-talent steward chiefly because he used his one or two talents to their utmost capacity. But most important of all, he furnished the spark which lighted the fires in the lives of such men as Wilfred Grenfell, John R. Mott, Robert E. Speer, and Henry Drummond.

Carpentering, cab driving, corn planting—each is a holy calling if one is a true steward with every talent in active use for Kingdom interests. No layman has a right to separate his religion from his means of livelihood.

NOT HOW MUCH ABILITY, BUT IS IT ALL COMMITTED?

An incident from the life of David applies so perfectly at this point! David had received permission to challenge Goliath. King Saul's armor was offered him, but it did not fit. David felt out of place, uncomfortable in it. So he discarded the ill-fitting protection made for another man and went to do battle wielding his deadly sling, which he was capable of handling.

It is human for most of us to wish we were gifted with unusual talent. We know we must not envy a talented person, but we do wish that we had some ability that would lift us out of the bog of mediocrity and give some distinction to our feeble spark of genius.

Actually the thing to worry about isn't increasing the number of your talents but putting to the fullest use the ability you have. You might be amazed at how busy that will keep you. It may be pride or it could be indifference that prevents us from doing our bit. We're afraid our efforts will suffer by comparison with the work of some more gifted person. Or we just don't have the energy to bestir ourselves in what we deem a thankless task. If you aren't at your best in the Master's vineyard, remember the words in Amos 6:1, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!"

There is nothing trivial or insignificant in God's work. You have heard the story of the hod carrier who labored all day at the back-breaking job of carrying bricks up a ladder to an upper level of a church under construction. Some well-meaning person came along and commiserated with him on his hard lot. The laborer wiped the perspiration from his brow, smiled broadly, and informed his sympathizer that he wanted no one to feel sorry for him, as he was delighted with his job and proud of the part he had in building a cathedral.

Only a few are flames of fire in Kingdom work. Most of us are mere candles attracting little attention from the

passing crowd. Thank God for the ten-talent men and women. What exploits they have accomplished! But don't despair if you're in the one- and two-talent class. You have thousands of companions. And God has assignments for you that will keep you on the go until your work is finished. Stephen might be likened to a candle. But it is possible that his feeble flame touched off a spark in Saul's heart that eventuated in the Apostle Paul's ten-talent ministry.

All through the centuries holy flames have consumed humble candles. Lives have burned out for God in out-of-the-way places, unobserved by men but not for a moment overlooked by God's all-seeing eye.

Light Thou my candle, Lord! Who knows what soul may catch the gleam, take heart, and push on as a spreading flame?

Should there be a lingering question in your mind as to God's basis for rewarding service, read again two passages in your New Testament. First, Mark 12: 41-44, the case of the widow who cast her two mites into the Temple treasury. Jesus immortalized her, not because of the amount she gave, but because it represented all she had. Next, Matt. 10: 42, where Jesus says that the giving of a cup of cold water shall not be without its reward. Remember that God's standards of measurement are as far removed from those of the world as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Some timid souls, lacking self-assurance, withhold their service from a sincere sense of inadequacy. If you are one of them, you might even thank God for it. There is hope for you. It is quite possible that you have high ideals of perfection in any public service and along with it that overwhelming sense of ineffectiveness. If you will simply embrace the truth of stewardship with respect to your talent, you are just the person God can use. God has countless openings for persons with a humbling sense

of inadequacy. But it must be coupled with a strong desire to be at your best in His service, a willingness to try, even at the risk of seeming failure. After all, the only correct measure of adequacy is kept in heaven. Omniscience alone can rightly gauge human capacity and effort.

Samuel Johnson voiced this truth when he wrote:

*And sure th' Eternal Master found
His single talent well employed.*

Who would have the temerity to appraise the adequacy of Susanna Wesley, of Abraham Lincoln's mother, of Grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice as reflected in the life and labors of Timothy?

And finally, this encouraging scripture for all who struggle with a sense of limited ability, "Our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. 3:5).

Your channel may be so small that only a trickle of God's power can pass through. But how vital that trickle is to other lives, you may never know. Never mind about its size; just be sure there is a clear passage from God's powerhouse to your dedicated life. And don't wait for the big opportunity. Start where you are. Put your talents to work. Leave results with God.

YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY IS INESCAPABLE.

Accountability is one of the more serious terms in the lexicon of stewardship. Its significance of course is that, as stewards with trusts committed to our care, we shall be called to account for that which has been allotted to us and for which we are responsible. God-given talents are not to be held in light esteem. A man of more than average ability was teaching a Sunday school class. At the close of the session an impressed listener remarked to this teacher, "You certainly are going to have a lot to answer for." Strange thing to say, but the speaker knew

that this teacher had not been a dependable worker. He had not made the most of his talent. At a great gathering of Christian workers a song evangelist with an exceptionally beautiful voice was asked to sing a solo at the Sunday school session. He refused and appeared annoyed that anyone would presume to ask him to sing at anything but a worship service. He couldn't waste his superior talent upon such a minor affair as a Sunday school service.

If your sense of stewardship is acute, no service will be too slight, no task too menial, no effort too demanding. This principle applies to those who sing, play an instrument, teach, preach, or whatever may be their specialty.

On the subject of our accountability in the stewardship of our talents permit a word of caution if you are tempted to classify the importance of opportunities. Do not attempt to grade them in order of significance. Leave that strictly to God. It's away out of your field and, frankly, should be none of your concern. For support of this theory read Eccles. 11:6, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

In the time of Charles Dickens the "counting room" was a familiar term in English business parlance. It was a room in back of a store or business establishment where money was counted. You may feel that a lot of things "don't count." Don't be too sure of what you can rightly throw into the wastebasket. God keeps a "counting room" of His own. Why don't you hang the "Gone out of business" sign on yours?

No one is free to shut himself in, to become an "island" removed from other people's concerns and problems and needs. Some are by nature contemplative and withdrawn. They enjoy solitude. They can exist alone in a world of thought and study and reflection. To some,

a life of this kind has tremendous appeal. It is sheltered, cloistered, peaceful, "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife."²

If you have a leaning in this direction do not permit it to become a fixation. The three disciples wanted to stay on the Mount of Transfiguration. But that wasn't Christ's plan. They must return to the world of realism, of frustrated companions, of complaining humanity.

You are here for the good you can do—for the service you can render, for the fellow men you can help, for the souls you can win, for the God you can glorify.

If you have embraced Christian stewardship as a way of life, then remember that you have invested your life, your whole life, your comforts, your preferences, your inclinations, in the service of God. "Ye are not your own." You are a trusted steward of the Most High God.

Some years ago a Sunday school teacher had a small class of girls which she had built to a large group. She stopped girls on the street and invited them to her class. She supervised their social activities, counseled with them concerning their personal problems, visited them in their homes. Many of them joined the church and became earnest workers. She held a responsible position as a secretary in a law office but she gave all she had to that class of girls. She said with all due Christian modesty, "I have done my best; there isn't a thing I have known to do that I haven't done for these girls." She may have had—and she did have—exceptional talent, but how many with equal or less ability could join her in that testimony?

One of the blocks hampering the flow of consecrated service is indifference. Closely akin is complacency. This easygoing attitude is a major curse of modern Christianity. The two evils unite to form a disastrous threat to

²Thomas Gray, "Elegy in a Country Churchyard."

the investment of much-needed talent in the Church's program. Too many Christians mix their religion with so much moderation that they become "impeccable models of blameless mediocrity."

Take stock of yourself. What is your rating as a steward? Do you qualify as a good "soldier of the Cross"? As "the Son of God goes forth to war" do you "follow in His train"? Are you doing your best to live a cushioned existence, to surround yourself with all the comforts of this push-button civilization, regardless of the needs of others?

If you belong to this "cult of conformity," turn about-face this very moment. Enroll now in the ranks of God's militia. Take up your cross and follow the Christ, who "took upon him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7). Forget everything else. Plan for a life of active service with all your abilities dedicated. It will transform your life, push back the horizons of your world, fill your days with absorbing interests and soul-rewarding service. And you will be able to look forward to the time when "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27).

Fritz Kreisler, famous violinist, took no pride in his musical gifts. He said, "I was born with music in my system. It is a gift from God. I deserve no credit for it. I do not look upon the money I earn as my own. It is a fund entrusted to me for proper use as a Christian."

Your talent may be the power of convincing speech, skill with a musical instrument, a pleasing singing voice, a winsome personality, the quality of leadership, or the ability to make money. Whatever your aptitude, count it not as something to use for your own pleasure or gain. Use it for the glory of God, and it will keep piling up dividends long after you are gone.

Summary

Christian stewardship is all-embracing. God wants all of us, a complete surrender, a full commitment.

All for Jesus! all for Jesus!

All my being's ransomed powers:

All my thoughts and words and doings,

All my days and all my hours.

Not only does God demand a full or quantitative dedication. He demands a qualitative offering with right attitudes and pure motives. Our attitude is that nothing we are or have belongs to us. Love for God impels us to worship by laying everything at His feet. Our motivation is in line with I Cor. 10:31, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Questions for Discussion

1. What is meant by talent as related to stewardship?
2. What should be the attitude of one who realizes he is endowed with only limited ability?
3. Is there danger of serving God with wrong motives?
4. Does God reward the gifted worker in greater degree than one with fewer talents?
5. Should one plan his life and service for greatest usefulness or may this be left to circumstances?
6. What aspect of stewardship makes our acceptance or rejection of its claims so important?

LET ME BE A GIVER!

*Dear God, if I can share some simple gift
With one, oppressed, who walks my path today,
I know my heavy burdens, too, will lift,
And smoother and more fair will seem the way.*

*Let me keep giving from a loving heart,
That other lives may richer, fuller be;
I would be quick to see the teardrops start,
And swift to lend a hand of sympathy.*

*Make me, I pray Thee, Father, unafraid
To give myself again and yet again.
When day is done, if I my all have paid,
It shall be counted then, I know, as gain!¹*

—KATHRYN BLACKBURN PECK

¹*Herald of Holiness*, July 17, 1950.

Your Stewardship of Money

A minister called on a wealthy parishioner seeking a donation to a worthy cause. The answer was, "Give! Give! Give! Is that all the church thinks about?" The minister replied, "Thank you, sir, for giving me the best definition of the Christian religion I have ever heard."

Money is sometimes referred to as "the almighty dollar." Washington Irving called it "that great object of universal devotion." Cicero must have been impressed with the power of money when he said, "There is no sanctuary so holy that money cannot profane it, no fortress so strong that money cannot take it by storm." John Milton in "Paradise Regained" says, "Money brings honor, friends, conquest, and realms."

The inaccuracy of most of the foregoing statements, even from the point of view of a worldlyling, isn't too difficult to prove. The ancient poet Horace said something that comes nearer to the truth, "Gold will be slave or master." The scripture supports the same view: "The love of money is the root of all evil" (I Tim. 6:10). If money is master, it will destroy us. If we control it, use it as something entrusted to our care, its power for good is inestimable. Our motivations are controlled by what we love. From the heart our actions are prompted.

The beauty of the dedicated life of stewardship is that in giving ourselves we include our possessions. We don't stop halfway. We go all out. For we are not our own; we are bought with a price.

MONEY—ITS PLACE IN THE LIFE OF A DEDICATED CHRISTIAN.

One great difference between the people of God and those of the world is in their attitudes toward material

things. God's people use them; the world worships them. It has ever been thus. Lot looked upon the fertile plains of Jordan instead of deferring to Abraham. Jacob schemed to defraud Esau of his birthright; Ananias' and Sapphira's lives ended tragically as they cherished their gold; Judas plumbed the depths of infamy for a paltry thirty pieces of silver. About fifteen centuries ago St. Augustine said, "The trouble with the world is that we try to worship what we should use, and use what we should worship." God planned that we should use material things for His glory and that we should worship Him only. But depraved mankind worships material things and seeks to use God for its own ends.

Money can provide many desirable things—comforts, conveniences, leisure, education; but it cannot buy health, happiness, nor heaven. Money is often sought after because of the selfish gratification it makes possible. Doubtless that is why it has been called "the acid test." It was just that for the rich young ruler who turned away sorrowfully. Is money your exacting master or obedient servant? Do you cherish and hoard it or do you use it remembering that you must give account for every penny?

"There are no pockets in a shroud." You can't take money with you. But you can send it on ahead. You can build up financial reserves in heaven, where it will yield satisfying dividends through eternity.

Robert E. Goodrich in *What's It All About?* relates that soon after he had taken the pastorate of Trinity Church in El Paso he received a letter containing several small envelopes. On each one was written, "My tithe." The letter said that the sender could no longer attend church, being bedridden, but he wanted the church to have his tithe. It was a small amount—seventy-five cents in each envelope. The pastor made inquiries and located his parishioner in a dilapidated lean-to at the rear of a

house in a poor section of the city. He had tuberculosis. His only income was a meager pension of seven and a half dollars a week. But he set aside his tithe faithfully. Dr. Goodrich says that as he stood by the bedside he realized that he was in the presence of greatness.²

The least important aspect of tithing is the fact that it goes a long way toward solving the financial problem of the church. If the members of a church of average size would faithfully tithe, there would be less need for drives, campaigns, or pleas for money. What really matters in tithing is the effect it has on the individual who adopts it as a standard of giving. The tither qualifies for God's special blessing.

Earning maketh an industrious man.
Spending maketh a well-furnished man.
Saving maketh a prepared man.
Giving maketh a blessed man!

MONEY—IT HAS LIMITATIONS; IT PRESENTS DANGERS.

A tightfisted attitude toward money is incompatible with a glowing Christian experience. A Spirit-filled individual is liberal, generous with his gifts and possessions.

Phillip Guedella when writing his biography of the Duke of Wellington carefully examined a bundle of the Duke's receipted bills and said, "Show me how a man spends his money and you will show me what kind of a man he is." Money is the acid test. It shows up the genuine and the spurious. It is a dead giveaway of what rules our lives. That is why Jesus had so much to say about the right and wrong uses of money.

Statistics on the use of money in our own nation are a disturbing index of the temper of the times.

In 1960 American consumers and businesses spent \$11,500,000,000 for beer, wine, and liquor. This was \$300,-

²Robert E. Goodrich, *What's It All About?* (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell).

000,000 more than the total spent for alcoholic beverages in 1959 and \$740,000,000 more than was spent in 1958.

The following table shows U.S. personal consumption expenditures for 1958, 1959, and 1960 (all figures supplied by the Office of Business Economics of the U.S. Department of Commerce).

	1958	1959	1960
Alcoholic beverages (total)	\$10,760,000,000	\$11,200,000,000	\$11,500,000,000
Alcoholic beverages (personal)	9,201,000,000	9,605,000,000	9,860,000,000
Gasoline and oil	10,532,000,000	10,680,000,000	11,613,000,000
Tobacco	6,376,000,000	7,041,000,000	7,493,000,000
Shoes and other footwear	4,090,000,000	4,282,000,000	4,475,000,000
Religious & welfare activities	3,939,000,000	4,281,000,000	4,687,000,000
Electricity	4,169,000,000	4,537,000,000	4,830,000,000
Telephone & telegraph	3,806,000,000	4,042,000,000	4,419,000,000
Physicians	3,901,000,000	4,608,000,000	4,960,000,000
Books, magazines, newspapers, etc.	3,049,000,000	3,662,000,000	3,868,000,000
Medical care & hospital ins.	1,359,000,000	1,376,000,000	1,541,000,000 ³

Dr. R. T. Williams told a story about a man of considerable means present in a meeting where a pull for finances was in progress. This man became more and more irritated and finally exploded to someone close by: "Money! Money! Money! When will they quit these drives for money?" Dr. Williams said, "I could answer that brother's question; the money raising program will end for him when he is laid away six feet underground."

A dedicated Christian never grumbles about giving money. He doesn't give until it hurts. The hurt comes from not having more to give to the Church and its soul-saving program.

Workmen began their first excavation of the ruins of Pompeii in 1748. They found a human skeleton with bony hands clenched. Nearby were several coins which apparently this man had clutched as the molten lava and suffocating ashes proved stronger than his tenacious grasp of his worldly wealth.

The spirit of materialism is blinding, deceiving. It prevents us from realizing that "the things which are

³*Herald of Holiness.*

seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:18).

This shortsighted outlook on life is best illustrated by the story of a carefree, barefoot boy kicking up the dust on a country road. His eyes were turned upward to the beauty of the clouds, to the treetops waving in the breeze. The dust oozed up between his toes. He was alive to beauty all around him. Then the feeling of something different! He bent down and uncovered a gold chain. He fingered it with excitement, finally pocketing it in his worn overalls. But as he went on he no longer whistled and bounced with his head lifted high. His eyes were fixed on the road, his feet dragged. He looked down, oblivious to the beauty around him. He hoped to find more gold treasure. He surrendered to materialism.

THE TITHE IS THE MINIMUM.

Tithing, the payment of one-tenth of one's income for the financial support of the church and its program, was an Old Testament law. It was the system given by God to Moses for the support of the Levites, the priests. Tithing has been adopted by Protestant Christians the world over as a standard of giving.

The Church of the Nazarene does not make tithing a requisite for membership. Under "Special Rules" the church *Manual* makes this emphatic statement:

We believe that the scriptural method of gathering money for the support of the church is by means of tithes and offerings. We urge that our people adopt tithing as the scriptural and satisfactory plan, that each member may do his minimum share in the support of the whole church, local, district, and general.⁴

And on the basis of divine promises to liberal givers, we exhort our people, in addition to the tithe, to make

⁴*Manual, the Church of the Nazarene, 1960, p. 45.*

freewill offerings as generous as circumstances will permit.

The *Manual* statement "for the support of the church" is significant. It implies that the Church has claim to one's tithe. It is elementary that we have an obligation to support the church of our choice.

Occasionally an objection to tithing is raised on the basis that it is an Old Testament law and New Testament Christians are not under the law but under grace. There may be sincere arguments against tithing as a legalistic system. However, the reasons for tithing are far more convincing than the objections. The following six affirmations for tithing are adapted from an article in the July 23, 1957, issue of *Gospel Herald* (Mennonite), "Is Tithing for the Christian?" by Milo Kauffman.

1. God is the Owner under grace just as much as He was under the law. The obligation of Christians under grace certainly is not less than that of the Jews under the law of Moses. The only valid argument against the tithe is "above the tithe."
2. The standards of Jesus were never lower than those of the law. He did not lower the standard of giving. He taught that the righteousness of His followers should exceed that of the Pharisees.
3. Christians are not legally bound to tithe. But neither are they legally bound to be baptized, to become members of the church, to attend church services, to read the Bible. Chrysostom, one of the Early Church fathers, said: "If it were a dangerous thing to fail in paying the tithes then [under the law], to be sure it is a much more dangerous thing now."
4. The fact that Christians are not under the law, but under grace, by no means gives them license to go contrary to the law or to live below the

standard of the law. The Christian lives above the law and its requirements.

5. Tithing brings satisfying rewards. Countless Christians have testified to blessings received because of tithing. Others admit having discounted the practice and losing out temporally and spiritually as a result.
6. Only the Christian who gives above the tithe is justified in speaking against the practice of tithing. Any argument against the tithe must never justify less than the tithe. Surely grace should do more than the law.⁵

OFFERINGS OUT OF A HEART OF CONCERN.

The practice of tithing does not fulfill our financial obligation to God and His Church. To Christians the tithe should be the minimum. The New Testament standard of stewardship is this: Everything we have is entrusted to us for Spirit-directed use for God's kingdom; nothing that we have is ours to use selfishly. That is the central truth of stewardship. So after we have given our tithe, we are still accountable to God for the rest.

Even the Jews, under law, did not stop with the tithe. They gave liberally in offerings. The Jewish tithe was used solely to support the priestly tribe of Levi. When Solomon's magnificent Temple was built, it was financed by freewill offerings. When the Temple was repaired, the cost was covered by donations.

In tithing as in other aspects of stewardship the completely dedicated Christian lives in the field of "unenforceable obligations." He doesn't stop with the letter of the law. He goes beyond the point of compulsion. He does what no authority or book of rules could force him to do. He even goes beyond what God might require

⁵Milo Kauffman, "Is Tithing for the Christian?" *Gospel Herald*.

in order for him to make it through to heaven. "Un-enforceable obligations"! Have you explored that delightful realm? If you have, you know of what Bud Robinson was speaking when he talked about being "knee-deep in clover."

LIVING BY GIVING—THE ABUNDANT LIFE.

It's an oft repeated paradox that what you keep you lose and what you give you keep. The same idea was expressed by Jesus when He said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35).

The striking thing about the parable of the Good Samaritan is that he did not stop with ministering to the unfortunate man's wounds; he placed him on his own beast, took him to an inn, and arranged to take care of all expenses until the recovery process was completed. There are many who will pity the needy and deplore their destitute condition but their concern ends there. Why do not such "far-off followers" face up to the fact that Christians do not qualify as "sons of God" by their words but rather by their works?

There is no use in seeking refuge from the stern obligation of Christian stewardship in religious forms and practices. A religion without the personal note in it is a decidedly sorry affair. The dead letter of religion cannot substitute for its living, loving spirit.

No wonder that someone has said, "The Church of Christ is tame, tepid, and timid in a day when Christianity needs a crusade terrible as an army with banners." Too many professed followers of Christ have joined a cult of relaxation, accepted a gospel of tranquillity, and subscribed to doctrines of physical, financial, and spiritual prosperity. The air waves and the printed page are full of that comfortable creed.

No thinking person can fail to recognize the dangerous trend. There is nothing gained by making these observations unless we carefully examine our own hearts, pray earnestly for God to cleanse us from secret faults, and keep our hearts filled with compulsive love for those in need of help. We must be on guard lest while men beg for bread we offer them stones.

From the many ways of giving, perhaps the following are the most common: (1) The haphazard way—to give something to every cause without careful inquiry into its merits; (2) the capricious way—to give to causes according to one's mood; (3) the substitute way—raising money by some program or device, such as selling merchandise; (4) the systematic way—a careful record of income out of which a minimum of one-tenth (the tithe) is paid; (5) the sacrificial way—to live simply, frugally, denying oneself luxuries in order to give as much as possible to God's cause. John Wesley practiced and recommended limiting his expenditures to essentials and giving away the rest.

Living by giving! What a glorious privilege—to recognize our own dependence and God's ownership by giving! Giving our all, our talents, our personalities, our love, our means!

It has been said that we should give until it hurts. That is not an adequate standard. A great many people hurt too easily. It is interesting to consider New Testament means and methods of giving. Paul was an old hand at raising money. He made no apologies when asking for financial aid for those in need. But he used no "high pressure" drive. In fact, he used what is sometimes called a "soft sell." He did not expect too much because of their poverty-stricken condition. But the Macedonian church came through with surprising liberality. They gave according to their means and beyond. Out of their "abundant joy" they overflowed in liberality. What a picture of that early church! What an

example of dynamic Christianity! You can't defeat such a people. Paul didn't discourage them. He knew that overflowing givers are never left without their reward. He knew that it is impossible to outgive the great Giver.

I said that "giving until it hurts" is not an adequate standard. A much better standard of giving is to "give until you feel good." How can one have any depths of compassion for the lost and needy and underprivileged and not give—give until he feels good at being in partnership with the Son of God in the salvation of the lost? And anyone would be insensitive not to feel good about laying up for himself treasures in heaven, where they will pay dividends throughout all eternity.

In contrast to that exhilarating phrase "living by giving" is what Halford Luccock calls "dead money." He mentions that in banking circles dead money is funds held in banks when the depositors cannot be found. National banks alone report fifty million dollars in 2,329,678 accounts. Dead money, not circulating—no owners. Dr. Luccock speaks of "another sort of dead money—that which is never invested in human life." He goes on to say:

The Biblical phrase: "Passed from death unto life," may apply to a person's pocketbook as well as to a person's soul. How much of our money is "dead" in that sense, so that it never ministers to the lives of people?

In regard to our possessions, we need the old miracle of the Garden of Eden. "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." If we allow God to breathe the breath of life into our pocketbook, it, too, can become a living and life-giving power.⁶

Summary

The value and significance of money lie in its potential for good or bad. When properly used it can bring

⁶Halford E. Luccock. *Unfinished Business* (New York: Harper & Brothers).

relief for physical needs, it can open doors for evangelization, it can help spread the gospel to the ends of the earth both by personal representation and by the printed page. It can be used selfishly to gratify carnal desires. It can be a medium for indulgence in leisure, pride, sensuality, and worldly amusement. The latter use produces no leaders or famous devotees. In the former company there are many whose names will be remembered as long as time lasts and whose examples are an inspiration to all who wish to make their lives worthwhile. Among them are Doctors Grenfell and Schweitzer, Scientists Einstein and Carver, Musicians Fritz Kreisler and Jenny Lind. It is true what someone wrote about silver: "Angel or devil, I am what you make me."

Money has its limitations. Many desirable things it cannot buy. It has dangers; instead of a means of blessing it can become an instrument of destructive self-gratification.

Money connotes obligations and privileges. The tithe is a symbol of God's ownership. We return to Him a tithe of our earnings as a minimum of giving in recognition of His sovereignty. It becomes a privilege when we give offerings above the tithe because of our love for God and His cause and our concern for the welfare of our fellow men.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the real value of money for the Christian in his relation to the kingdom of God?
2. What are some of the things money cannot buy?
3. Why is money dangerous and what are some of the dangers it poses?
4. What are some reasons for systematic tithing?
5. What place do offerings have in the life of a Christian steward?
6. How may we reach out and live nobly and helpfully by love offerings?

REWARD OF FAITHFULNESS

*The deeds which selfish hearts approve
And fame's loud trumpet sings
Secure no praise where truth and love
Are counted noblest things;
And work which godless folly deems
Worthless, obscure, and lowly,
To Heaven's ennobling vision seems
Most Godlike, grand, and holy.*

*When endless day dispels the strife
Which blinds and darkens now,
Perchance the brightest crown of life
Shall deck some lowly brow.
Then learn, despite thy boding fears,
From seed with sorrow sown,
In love, obscurity, and tears
The richest sheaves are grown.*

—EDWARD HARTLEY DEWART

VI

Weighed in the Balance

Only a callous person can fail to be deeply affected by the seriousness of the present world situation: the cold war between major powers, the fighting wars waged by smaller countries, the mounting costs of armament, the threat of intercontinental rocket warfare, the appalling advances in nuclear weapons. A while back we thought the limits had been reached. Now, scarcely any fantastic theory, scientific experiment, fabulous expense, or impending danger excites us.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "In the last days perilous times shall come." Moffatt's translation reads, "hard times"; Weymouth says, "grievous times"; "difficult times." Take your choice. Whichever one you select offers a startling description of this generation. Sobering thought! This commentary of the last days (and surely we are in the thick of them) is made because of the condition of men's hearts and their attitudes which are dominated by self-centeredness, greed for money, ingratitude, and other forms of ungodliness. Convincing examples of Christian stewardship were never more needed than now. The attitudes and practices of faithful stewardship constitute a pattern followed by all who aspire to a full and satisfactory spiritual life. Inner faith plus outward action add up to the complete life of faithfulness which is the only source of happiness. This blessedness is not an emotional state but a contentment, a sense of God's approval, a deep assurance and serenity contrasted with the uncertainty, restlessness, and inner conflict of the uncommitted Christian. The latter type of Christian is unstable, unsettled, and an easy prey

for the modern cults who promise an easy road to mental health, inner poise, and success without the self-abnegation and humility of spirit, lacking which, it is impossible to walk with God.

WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR EVERY TALENT GOD HAS GIVEN US.

To be accountable means that one is liable to be called to account. And if one is thus called to account, the implication is that he is responsible for something.

Stewardship is not an imposed Scripture standard only; it is a fundamental philosophy of right living. A father relates this incident: "I taught my children by precept and example to tithe and give of their income. One day when sorting personal belongings left at home by my son who was then a student in one of our colleges, I ran across a small account book which he kept in his early teens. Income as well as expenditures were carefully recorded. What brought to me a deep sense of joy and satisfaction was that there were considerably more entries designated as church offering and/or Sunday school offering than expenditures for self-gratification."

FAITHFULNESS IS THE MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

There are two things about the Christian faith that are particularly encouraging. One is the combination of universality and individuality in the gospel. It is for everyone. Its invitation is world-wide. *Your* sins may be forgiven and cleansed. And the second appeal is that in order to qualify for membership in the Christian faith and win the approval of the Head of the Church you need not be brilliant, nor popular, nor successful in material things. All you need is to be faithful. Be faithful in little things, and you shall be rewarded by participation in great things.

When you see others in action who are accomplished in performance, brilliant in mental capacity, charming in

personality, and you feel hopelessly overshadowed, reach for your Bible and read, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

The words "faithful," "faithfully," and "faithfulness" occur 100 times in the Bible. Men are inclined to judge by outward achievement but God weighs the thoughts and intents of the heart. To be faithful means to be dependable in the performance of duty; it means loyalty, reliability. If you are faithful you can be counted on. If you can be counted on for your best effort whenever your services are needed, you are faithful.

*Faithfully faithful to every trust,
Honestly honest in every deed,
Righteously righteous and justly just—
This is the whole of the good man's creed.*

—ANON.

The most serious aspect of accountability is that each individual will be required to give a report of his stewardship. No one chooses whether or not to accept the obligation. God is Owner and, acknowledge it or not, man must face the issue of stewardship. It follows that everyone will be called on to give an account of his trust.

Jesus told of the farmer who enjoyed an unusually abundant harvest. So he built new barns and planned on a life of ease and carefree enjoyment. But God interrupted his dreams of the future. ". . . Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20)

Paul preached this same truth of accountability. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow voiced a solemn truth in his well-known poem "A Psalm of Life":

*Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.*

Someone has forcefully said, "The inner threat of Christianity today is to be found in our own softness, lack of discipline and our identification with the world about us. In our easy, soft, comfortable, crossless existence we are no different from the pagans about us. When the church fails to challenge the heroic in man it has incalculably failed." Watch the trends in your own life. Be such a person and live such a life that if every person were as you, and every life as yours, this earth would be God's paradise.

One of the most serious aspects of life is that we are accountable to God for every thought, every word, every act. The carefree, happy-go-lucky, gay, playboy attitude may gain friends and assure popularity here but it is a poor preparation for the judgment day, when we shall be asked about how we have met the needs of our neighbors. The steward who has been remiss in his responsibilities and who has lived in selfish indulgence will be dismissed from the presence of the Judge.

How much better to cast our lot with God's chosen few and sing with Charles Wesley:

*"Arm me with jealous care,
As in Thy sight to live;
And, oh, Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give"!*

The most serious question anyone can ask himself is: "What is your life?" Most of us have such an abundance of *things*. So much of our time and energies are taken up with material affairs—making a living, paying for a home, keeping up with the neighbors, driving the

latest style car, relaxing in office, church, and home with air conditioning.

Jesus recognized the tendency of humanity to covet and acquire material things when He warned His listeners to be not anxious, "Take no thought for your life . . . Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matt. 6:25)

Examples of stewardship in the Church of the Nazarene are more than could be recounted in this book. Dr. P. F. Bresee was recognized in the church of his choice for his preaching and administrative ability. It wasn't an incidental decision that induced him to continue his emphasis on entire sanctification as a second definite work of grace in face of opposition. It required a strong sense of loyalty and obligation for him to step out of position of influence and security and walk out under the stars in order to preach the full gospel.

For an instance of Christian stewardship in a contemporary setting take the case of Dr. Howard H. Hamlin which he relates in the October 15, 1961, issue of the *Herald of Holiness*. It was in the depression years of the early thirties when he was laid off with no prospect of employment. Thirty-five dollars of his thirty-six-dollar severance check were earmarked for desperately needed dental work. The next Sunday an offering was taken to lift the church building debt. The Holy Spirit whispered unmistakably that he should give his entire pay check. He did just that. Dr. Hamlin's success as a surgeon and his outstanding contribution to the church undoubtedly stem from his early loyalty to the principles of stewardship. It has been proved again and again that, when one is completely committed to God, nothing else matters except as it relates to God's kingdom.

Why is it so difficult for us to learn that the only worthwhile life consists in the abundance of spiritual qualities we possess: love, joy, peace, long-suffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control? Perhaps it is because we are constantly exposed to this self-centeredness surrounding us. How we need to pray for deliverance from the standards and the spirit of the present evil world!

The admonitions Jesus gave were directed to individuals, but they are just as relevant to groups of organized Christians—churches. The life of a church does not consist in its abundance of possessions—members, equipment, financial budgets, impressive places of worship. The Laodicean church boasted of wealth and worldly goods, felt the need of nothing more. But by heaven's standards it was rated wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

To carry this thought a bit further, we can apply this standard to nations. The nation that forgets God may boast of its wealth, brains, statesmanship. But the Lord says it shall not prosper in the things that endure. May God bless and help our beloved country.

WHY?

*The angels from their home on high
Look down on us with wondering eye
That where we are but passing guests
We build such strong and solid nests
And where we hope to dwell for aye
We scarce take heed a stone to lay.*

—ANON.

WELL DONE, THE REWARD FOR FAITHFULNESS.

No one who loves God and serves his fellow men is motivated solely by the thought of reward. However, the Bible frequently encourages us to persevere in godliness and in faithful stewardship because of the reward. Moses considered the reproaches suffered because of Christ to be more desirable than the riches of

Egypt. Even the self-crucifying Paul spoke of his reward for going beyond the call of duty, for living in the field of "unenforceable obligations." Jesus exhorted His listeners to do good expecting no returns and in this way qualify for great reward.

Jesus taught that each one shall be rewarded according to his works (Matt. 16:27). Better do a bit of checking to see if your action life equals your profession of faith. Aspirations, resolutions, good intentions never fed the hungry, clothed the naked, sheltered the homeless, nor led a straying soul to God.

The man who says no to harmful appetites and practices and who runs a good race with patience will be *rewarded* with an incorruptible crown (I Cor. 9:25).

Those in positions of leadership who do not abuse their powers will be *rewarded* with a crown of glory (I Pet. 5:4).

All who endure temptation are accounted blessed and will be *rewarded* with the crown of life (Jas. 1:12).

Paul (and the rest of us may too) looked forward to a crown of rejoicing as a *reward* for the souls he led to Christ (I Thess. 2:19).

Paul, again, as he reviewed his life, was confident of a crown of righteousness. And don't miss what he says in closing, "And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).

Rewards! There will be enough to go around. No deserving soul will be overlooked or left out.

On the subject of rewards, I never tire of that precious scripture, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

When Jesus was on earth many followed Him because they thought He would accomplish the overthrow of the Roman Empire and restore the glory of Israel.

Others followed Him for the loaves and fishes. They were willing to accept Jesus for what He might do for them in a material way. They followed for what they could gain.

Today's world is too crammed with materialists—shortsighted, earthly souls thinking that things seen are eternal and the things not seen unworthy of attention. They are looking through the wrong end of the telescope. It is cause for lament that the accent of the present day is on temporal rather than eternal things. We must keep up with the neighbors. Our cars, our homes, our churches must compare favorably with others. How prone we are to forget the admonition of Peter, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims [those who are just passing through], abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Pet. 2:11)!

In one of the churches in Rome a picture may be seen which depicts the life of love and service of Thomas Aquinas, whose devotional writings have inspired thousands. Christ appears to him and asks what Aquinas desires as a reward. The aged saint with uplifted face cries out: "Nothing but Thyself, Lord."

There are many promises in the Bible to those who practice liberality in giving. Jesus never spoke hastily or carelessly. And in Luke 6:38 He said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." First good measure, no stinting, then pressed down and a bit more added. Next all of it is shaken together, and on top is poured still more until it is heaped up and running over. Our God is a God of abundant supply. How can anyone hoard and covet and shut up his depths of compassion for the needy when such a God of lavish reward is ours?

There is so much comfort in the Bible for those who feel inferior in the presence of celebrities, those

who feel inadequate for front-line service, yet who yearn to serve their Master wholeheartedly. Jesus himself said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16: 10).

MY WORK

*Lord, let me not die until I've done for Thee
My earthly work, whatever it may be.
Call me not hence with mission unfulfilled;
Let me not leave my space of ground untilled;
Impress this truth upon me that not one
Can do my portion that I leave undone.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

There's a lot of drudgery in life—days of routine tasks void of glamour, recognition, and adulation. But they are necessary. You can chafe and fret and stew. Or you can make your tedious round of grinding duties glow and sparkle with the presence and smile of God. There is no place of lowly service that cannot be transformed into holy ground aflame with God's glory. Days of pressure, irritation, and annoyance must be endured. No one relishes them. But if through all of this you are faithful in your dedication, your service, your devotion, your worship, God never fails to take note and never overlooks the reward.

Summary

A dedicated Christian lives gloriously and triumphantly in favorable or adverse circumstances. He takes literally the truth, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28).

He exclaims with David, "My times are in thy hand" (Ps. 31:15).

His chief concern is that his love, his time, his talent, his money are at God's disposal.

He practices Christian stewardship.

For additional material on stewardship and tithing contact the General Stewardship Committee, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City 31, Missouri.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what respect are we accountable to God and why?
2. Does God's measure of reckoning results place all of us on the same level, be our talents many or few?
3. The reward is not our motivation, but what part does it have in our life of stewardship?
4. What are some of the advantages or rewards of stewardship during this present life?

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