

Stewardship Spirituality

- Father Darrin J.G. Gurr

A disciple's response

Stewardship is a profound spirituality that enables us to live out our Christian discipleship to the full. It is a way of re-connecting what seems to be the 'ordinariness' of our daily living with the extra-ordinariness of our life in God.

Stewardship begins with the simple awareness that God is the ultimate giver, beginning with the gift of our very life and everything else that follows - all that we have and hold. By God's continual goodness and providence present in our lives, we are able to know what we know, and have what we have. Deeply conscious that God gives us all that we have and hold for our personal well-being and life, stewardship, therefore, calls us as Christian disciples to reveal to others what God's goodness is all about. We do this by using our God-given gifts in the way that God intends.

How to use our gifts as God intends

God's greatest desire for each and everyone of us is to grow in our love for God and for one another. Jesus tells us, *'You must love The Lord your God with all your heart, your mind and your soul, and your neighbour as yourself'* (Matt. 16:2).

The gifts that we have been given are given so that the greatest commandment of God can become possible in our lives. As stewards of God's gifts, therefore, we must use everything God gives us in a God-given way so as to achieve our love for God and one another. The manner in which we use what we have and hold must always strive towards deepening these two important gospel values.

God's gifts of time, talent and treasure

The gifts that God gives us falls under three primary headings: *time, talent and treasure*.

Time is the very gift of each moment - every second of every hour. 24 hours are given to us each day. To use these hours as God intends means that we use our time wisely and always for the good, namely: our personal and communal prayer and worship, our rest and recreation, our time in solitude and with one another, our work and learning, our caring for ourselves and for those around us. Using our time in ways that God intends becomes a means to personal holiness and a life deeply aware of the presence of God.

Talent includes the variety of gifts and abilities that we all have. These consist of the talents and gifts of which we are already aware (and proud to share), as well as the many gifts we continue to discover in ourselves. Stewardship acknowledges the intended use of those very gifts and talents as a reflection of God, the giver from whom these gifts are given. As such, using our talents as stewards means always revealing the giver of those gifts.

Treasure is the gift of our financial resources. Making money is a result of how we use some of our time and talent. It is a direct consequence of using what we have been given by God. Our treasure, therefore, must be used to better enhance our time and talent as well as our life with God and one another.

Our goal as contemporary disciples is to achieve a fuller expression of our life in God by reflecting and revealing how we intentionally use all of our gifts - all that we have and hold. In getting started, we must continually ask ourselves the following questions: 'Am I truly using all that I have and hold in a God given way?' ; and, 'Is how I am using what I have and hold enriching my life with God and others?'

Stewardship spirituality understands that 100% of everything we have and hold is from God and thus, to be used in a God given way. This spirituality also asks that a fair and just portion of our treasure be dedicated exclusively to God for the building up of the church and our sharing in the mission of Jesus. This dedicated portion we call *Stewardship-tithing*.

Reclaiming a true Stewardship-tithing

Throughout the scriptures, the traditional percentage dedicated to God is identified as 10% of what we have - the first fruits of the harvest, the first portion of our labours. Although this principle of 'tithing' continues to be the goal and guideline for Christian Stewardship, a good way to begin to grow in our spirituality of 'tithing' is by committing the first hour of our household income to God for the sharing in the mission and ministry of our church. Often this first hour is represented by 2.5% of our total household income. This way, regardless of whatever work we do, whatever way we make our living, whatever labour we perform, our work, living, or labour becomes the gift presented in the offering of the first hour. As a result, the offering we give is not merely our financial gift, but the actual work, living, and labour that went into making the financial gift possible. Our offering of the first hour, therefore, truly becomes the sacrificial work of our human hands, the first fruit of our labours. As we continue to deepen our understanding of stewardship and our life in God, our weekly gift will naturally and progressively continue to increase.

Growing confidently and consistently in our commitment to tithing, we will personally witness the direct benefits, blessings and joys associated with the profound meaning of stewardship spirituality.