

CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

*Drawing from Charles L. Lane's work Ask, Thank Tell,
the Stewardship Team of Resurrection Lutheran Church
wrote this series of articles for monthly newsletters in 2019.*



INTENTIONAL

The word “intentional” comes to mind when one thinks about our Stewardship Team’s mission statement: “To help God’s people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents and finances God has entrusted to them.”

Most of us, if not all of us, are very “intentional” when there is something we want to accomplish. We may give serious thought, consideration, and prayer to such an endeavor. We may go as far as setting goals and developing a plan to accomplish such goals.

When it comes to sharing with the church your gifts of time, talent and finances are you “intentional?”

There is a congregation in India when at the time of the offering some people come forward with money while others come forth with rice and other food. The families who offer rice don’t have much money. When they prepare food for their families they put a small amount of rice aside each day. As the week progresses they add to the rice that has been put aside and on Sunday they present their offering of rice. There is a food sale at the church on Monday and the money from the sale supports the congregation’s ministry.

This type of giving is “intentional.” The families have a plan of putting aside rice each day and they carry out that plan by bringing their offering of rice to church on Sunday. To be “intentional” in sharing your time, talent and finances means to develop a plan and carry it out. If you don’t have such a plan, your Stewardship Team strongly encourages you to develop a plan and live it out.

-Sherman Hicks

REGULAR

There is a strong connection between intentional giving and regular giving. As we learned from last month’s article *Intentional Giving* is establishing a plan for your giving. Regular Giving is simply executing on that plan. Regular giving is more likely to happen if you make your gift part of your routine. If you are paid weekly or monthly simply setting aside gifts at the same time can be an easy pattern.

We all know it is best to try to keep your life on a regular routine; doing things regularly like eating, sleeping, exercising, will help keep you happy and healthy. Anyone who has taken care of a baby knows that a regular routine is invaluable to a healthy, well rested baby and care giver. Establishing a routine is beneficial to the church. Regular giving allows the church to plan, budget and pay for expenses.

The church has made setting up a regular pattern of giving even easier with giving options including direct deposit and Simply Giving programs. Give them a try as you try to incorporate regular giving into your routine. Regular giving is simply executing on the plan that you have “intentionally” established. In this way we can share abundantly the time, talents and treasures that God has entrusted to us.

-Laura Rombalski

GENEROUS

For some of us Generous Giving is a logical extension of the plans which are made for Intentional and Regular Giving. Generosity doesn’t usually come from ‘giving what is left over’ and is not usually erratic or haphazard but results from the Intentional and Regular commitment of sharing our treasure.

For others, Generous Giving is an active response to the blessings we have been given by God. It is an emotional response which often results in us feeling even more blessed to be able to contribute. Ever heard the expression ‘You can’t out give God’ ? This cycle of giving sometimes opens us to new opportunities to share.

We all need to consider that God has given us time, talents and treasure while we are here on earth. How does he intend for us to use these gifts to help our neighbors near and far? When I ponder why God has allowed me to be a steward of His creation, I wonder what actions He is nudging me toward?

God has given us ‘More than Enough’. May we all be thankful and generously share our time, talents and treasure.

-Eloise Thompson

FIRST FRUIT

This month's article focuses on First Fruit Giving. Deuteronomy 26:1-2 was quoted in last year's Fall Emphasis hand-out introducing our stewardship campaign. The focus and the verse both brought tithing to my mind. As I am so inclined, I Googled for some background on the tithe and offering. It was interesting to learn a distinction between the two - an offering was something you gave, but the tithe was something you owed.

The purpose of the tithe or 1/10 of your harvest is to pay back that which God has provided you. The example from the first article of our newsletter series in April with the families in India setting aside a portion of their rice would fall into this category. The tithe was given to the Levites or officials of the synagogue in the era of our scriptures. They would use it to live off of and maintain the congregation. Since the Levites did not work the land they were dependent on those who did. Yet the Levites were also commissioned to take a tenth of the tithes the community provided them and use it for philanthropy with the community at large - specifically the most vulnerable.

The context I took from my research is that tithing is our financial responsibility. It doesn't have to be 10% but what is comfortable for you today. The important part is that we regularly and intentionally take a portion of that which we have earned and provide it for God's work. At Resurrection our first fruits are used to maintain the facilities and pay the staff of the congregation while a portion is set aside to support our community. Examples of our philanthropy are the sandwich ministry and endowment fund.

Offering, on the other hand, is a gift. We freely use our assets in the service of others. Although this is usually equated with currency like the tithe; just as valuable is your offering of time to serve with your talents God has provided you. Service work is as simple as sponsoring a summer coffee hour or joining the choir. Sharing those gifts with Resurrection in a regular manner strengthens your connection with our fellowship.

Now I am asking myself how my research relates to First Fruit Giving or stated in another way "Giving to God first and living off the rest?" To me it shows there are other ways to contribute to Resurrection than through finances. Although I know my monetary support is critical to the mission of the congregation; my offering of time and talents have just as much value and provide me a deeper connection with our fellowship. The essence here is to give first, give with an open heart and to give regularly.

- Rick Kline

PROPORTIONAL

This month, we focus in on the fifth characteristic: *proportional*. In Mark 12, we hear Jesus sit down by the place where people bring their offering at the temple. A widow comes and puts in two small coins. Jesus turns to his disciples and says, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on" (Mark 12: 43-44).

Those who have more are to give more, but no more generously or faithfully. Those who have less give less, but no less generously or faithfully. A tithe (one tenth or ten percent) is an example of the biblical prescription for proportional giving.

It's what we do as a congregation by tithing our contributions to the Metropolitan Chicago Synod based on the prior year's giving and sending it in monthly. As we slide into the end of summer, we invite you to reflect how you might grow in your proportional giving. Could you increase your financial contribution? Or maybe you could give more of your time or talents in this month or season to come? May God guide us all as we give proportionally to/at RLC and beyond!

- Pr. Kelly

CHEERFUL

"God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7) Everything we have comes from God, for the Bible says that "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father..." (James 1:17). So anything that we give toward the work of the Lord or to someone in need belongs to God anyway. We have just been entrusted with it by our heavenly Father. But God doesn't just want us to give; he wants us to give with gladness of heart. Why is that? First of all, it's because when we give, we are acting like God himself, who did not hold back his only Son, but freely gave him up for us all, that we might become his children. A parent is proud when the child imitates him and when others say that the child looks like the parent. That is how God in heaven feels when He sees a cheerful giver.

Secondly, Christians who give of their substance please God because it means that they trust the Lord to supply their own need. Finally, God knows that giving makes us joyful, because we were made in the image of God, who is the ultimate Giver. Think about these things when it is time to set aside your offering or when you are prompted to give to a worthy cause; and pray that the Lord might increase your faith to be able to be a cheerful giver.

-Kathleen West

From the Brooklyn Tabernacle; Devotional by Jim Cymbala