

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPORTANCE OF STEWARDSHIP GROWTH

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:8-11

Stewardship for Christians is not optional! As Christians, neither individuals nor congregations are given a choice as to whether we are stewards. We are stewards by definition. So the important question then is : “What kind of stewards are we?” What adjectives can be used to describe our stewardship? Generous, shrewd, loving, lukewarm, growing, responsible, indifferent, cautious, ect.? When lives are lived in a manner consistent with good stewardship, they take on greater meaning, joy and satisfaction.

Making The Case For Increased Stewardship Emphasis.

The case for placing much greater emphasis on stewardship is straightforward. For example:

- a) Once the basic physical needs of life are satisfied, humans are inclined to search, consciously or subconsciously, for things that give meaning, purpose and value to life. Stewardship growth can contribute.
- b) The central purpose of the church is to spread the gospel and help believers become disciples who follow the teachings and lifestyle modeled by Jesus Christ, the chief steward.
- c) An absolutely essential part of discipleship is growth in our stewardship to become better caretakers and managers of everything entrusted/given to us.
- d) At the very heart of Stewardship growth is our need to grow in our willingness to give. We were created to give. That is one of the implications of being “created in God’s image”. Only by growing in our ability to give can we experience the abundant life God intended for us.
- e) Every mission and ministry taken on by the church would benefit from individual and congregational stewardship growth.
- f) The materialistic, consumerism emphasis promoted by our culture is neither sustainable nor consistent with good stewardship of creation.

- g) Every problem facing individuals, the church or the world today can be positively impacted by improved understanding and practice of Christian Stewardship.

Call it a basic law of life! **Individuals grow as they intentionally reach out to serve other people in need instead of concentrating on their own personal needs. People die when they concentrate on their own needs.** This is just as true of organizations, churches included. Appreciating and responsibly using what has been entrusted to us-all of our gifts - to serve other people and all of creation is basic stewardship.

Making the case in a different way

The words or phrases that most commonly come to mind in connection with stewardship are:

Money/finances	budgets
pledging	commitment
fall campaigns	time and talent sheets

Most of these words or phrases have some natural connection to our “church” life which is actually a rather small part of our total life. Reinforcing the reality that church and traditional stewardship represent a very small part of our total life, is the fact that congregations across the USA, the average family contributes 2.4% of its income to the church. Assuming this income was the result of a 40 hour work week, 2.4% equals the value of about 1 hour’s wages.

We need a broader view. It has been said that “The path to discovery lies not in seeking new vistas but in having new eyes.” We must begin to look at stewardship with new eyes.

A larger, more biblically correct view of stewardship would consider that each week we are “given” 168 hours to use as we choose. How we use those 168 hours is a demonstration of our faith and a reflection of our stewardship. To be effective in promoting growth in discipleship, the needed major increase in Stewardship emphasis must broadly embrace every aspect of life. Not just what we do with 2,3 or 4 hours we spend each week doing “church” things but how we spend all 168 hours of each week.. Growth in our stewardship of all of life, will bring added meaning, purpose and joy in every hour.

A major increase in the effort being devoted to stewardship growth is essential. It will have both high “cost” and high benefits.

