

## **Giving to God: More Than JUST Passing the Offering Plate**

**by Susan Gurney**

"Stewardship" is a word often used in church that many just don't understand. Most think it just means putting some cash or a check on the offering plate when it is passed, but it really means far more than that.

From the very beginning God wanted us to care for all of His creation, to be stewards--managers and caretakers--of the earth and all living things. I believe this is what God meant in Genesis 1:28-30 when He told Adam and Eve to "subdue" His earth and to "rule over" all of its plants and animals. Taking this concept a few steps further, consider the fact that God made each of us. He gave each of us the abilities, health, and strength to make a living so our needs could be met. It then follows that all we "own" is really not ours, but are rather gifts "on loan" from God. He is allowing us to manage these "loaned gifts" as His stewards. Not only are we to be stewards of the money, time, property, talents, and "things" He has given us, but we are also to be the stewards of our own bodies! We are to take good care of our bodies--"the temples of God"--as the Bible so clearly reminds us in I Corinthians 3:16-17.

Recently it was a real "eye-opener" for me to re-read the account of God's instructions to Moses and the Israelites concerning the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Exodus:25-31 and Exodus:35-40, give very detailed descriptions of all that was involved in this process. From these passages we can glean many conclusions about God's gifts to us--and our gifts to Him. Over and over again the expected standards are stated: only the best for God...the purest gold, silver, and incense to be used in His house of worship; only the most gifted artists to work the wood, precious metals, and textiles; only the best teachers to guide willing workers; and only the first and the best--the "firstfruits"--to be

sacrificed on God's altar. It is emphasized in Exodus 36:3-7 that the giving of belongings, wealth, time, and God-given talents was to be done out of a willing heart, and that all who willingly gave, were not to stop giving until God, through Moses, told them to stop! (To give until God tells you not to give any more can be a scary thought to many but I think God would rather we view it as a challenge to grow in our faith in Him.) It is also made clear in the Exodus passages that material wealth, time, and skills are gifts from God and are to be given back to God as gifts of gratitude.

Romans 12:6-8 and 2 Corinthians 8:12 and 9:6-15 point out our further responsibilities in the using and giving of our God-given gifts: if God has given us a gift in the form of a skill or ability we are to use it to benefit others and to further His kingdom; we are to give willingly of what we have--God certainly doesn't expect us to give what we don't have, whether material things or skills--and we are to give cheerfully, knowing that God will always supply our needs and bless our giving.

Take a look at all that God has given you: your family, your health, your job, your home, and so on. Your personal list of God's blessings to you could go on endlessly. God gives only good gifts to us, His children. What good gifts will you give back to Him? Will it be your best, given willingly out of a grateful heart?

What does God's Word, the Bible, say about this?

Exodus 34:26a "Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God." NIV

Exodus 35:5a "From what you have, take an offering for the Lord. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering" NIV

Matthew 7:9, 11 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If you, then, ...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" NIV

Romans 12:6-8a "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously" NIV

2 Corinthians 8:12 "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have." NIV

2 Corinthians 9:7 "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." NIV

Now read the following Bible passages in your favorite version of the Bible:

Genesis 1:28-30

Exodus 31:1-6, 34:26, 35:4-35; 36:1-7

Matthew 7:7-12 and 25:14-30

Romans 12:6-8

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

2 Corinthians 8:12 and 9:6-15

Susan Gurney writes devotionals, poetry, short stories, memoirs, and nonfiction on family history, faith and nature. She has experience writing/editing church and family newsletters. Find Susan at

<http://ssimonsgurney.christianblogsites.com/blog/> Copyright 2013 Susan Simons Gurney

Article Source: <http://www.faithwriters.com-CHRISTIAN WRITERS>