

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Saturday 06 July - 8AM. Men's breakfast at the church building

Sunday 07 July - 10:30AM. Church service (also Wellington country park service in Thames Valley)

Sunday 14 July - 10:30AM. Speaker Kerry Mathurin

Sunday 21 July - 10:30AM. Speaker Olyden Johnson. Annual church meeting

Sunday 28 July - 10:30AM. Speaker Malcolm Cox

Sunday 8th Sept: A 'thank you' service

Saturday 14th Sept: AIM UK&I - "Family Life"

Sunday 15th Sept: Congregational vision workshop

Saturday 7th Dec: AIM UK&I - "World Views"

Stewardship and Sacrifice

Introduction

In this series of articles on money and possessions we have explored the Old Testament (OT) perspective on the topic, whether tithing is mandated for Christians (it is not), Scriptural teaching about the poor and needy, and paying church workers. What's left for this final article?

The faith-inspired blend of stewardship and sacrifice. Let's dive in.....

Scriptural Foundations of Stewardship

Old Testament Principles

The OT sets the foundation for stewardship. Everything belongs to God. Psalm 24:1 declares, "*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*" This recognition calls us to manage resources responsibly, acknowledging God as the ultimate owner. In Gen 1:28, God commands us to "*fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*" He highlights our responsibility to care for and wisely manage creation.

New Testament Teachings

The NT reinforces and expands on the concept of stewardship. Jesus' parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) illustrates that we are entrusted with resources to use for God's glory. The servants who wisely invest their master's money are rewarded, while the one who buries his talent out of fear is rebuked.

Moreover, 1 Peter 4:10 urges, "*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*"

This verse underscores that stewardship encompasses *all* gifts and resources, urging us to use them for the common good.

The Call to Sacrifice

Jesus' Example

Jesus Christ embodies the ultimate example of sacrifice. Phil 2:5-8 describes His humility and obedience, even to the point of death on a cross. Selflessness, compassion, and generosity marked Jesus' life and ministry. He calls His followers to take up their crosses daily (Luke 9:23) and to live a life of sacrificial love and service.

Apostolic Teachings

In Romans 12:1, Paul urges believers to "*offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*" This sacrificial living extends to all areas of life, encouraging us to prioritise God's will and the needs of others over personal comfort and gain.

Additionally, Hebrews 13:16 reminds us, "*Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*" Sacrifice in the Christian context is not merely about giving up possessions but actively doing good and sharing with those in need.

Stewardship Beyond Money

Time and Energy

Stewardship includes how we use our time and energy. Eph 5:15-16 advises, *"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."*

Skills and Gifts

We all possess unique skills and spiritual gifts. 1 Cor 12:4-7 explains, *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."* Using our gifts to build up the church and serve the community is a vital aspect of stewardship.

Experience and Wisdom

Our experiences, both good and bad, are valuable resources. 2 Cor 1:3-4 encourages us to comfort others with the comfort we have received from God. Sharing our experiences and lessons learned guides and supports others in their faith.

Trusting God in Generosity

The Principle of Faith

Generosity requires faith. Proverbs 3:9-10 promises, *"Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."* Trusting God with our resources involves believing that He will provide for our needs as we honour Him with our giving.

We Cannot Out-Give God

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 teaches, *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

God rewards generosity and ensures we have all we need to continue doing good.

The Joy of Generosity

Living Like Jesus

The joy of living a generous life comes from emulating Jesus. Acts 20:35 records Paul's words, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

Building Community and Relationships

Generosity fosters community and strengthens relationships. Galatians 6:2 encourages, *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ."* Generosity creates a sense of unity and shared purpose within the body of Christ.

Conclusion

Blending stewardship and sacrifice is fundamental for Christians, involving more than just finances. It involves the wise and generous use of time, energy, skills, and experiences to glorify God and serve others. Trusting in God's provision and following Jesus' example of selfless love leads to a fulfilling and joyful life. We become conduits of God's grace to the world around us, demonstrating the transformative power of the gospel through our generous living.

Has this article and the entire series changed your thinking about stewardship and sacrifice?

Your brother, Malcolm

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