

Devotional



Day Six

THE PURPOSE OF STEWARDSHIP

"This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and of your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" - II Corinthians 9: 12, 13, 15)

Why do we give to missions?

A quick priority check reminds us that, of course, the reason to give to missions is to bring glory to God. We have the privilege of showing His greatness, His majesty, and His incredible love to men and women. Astounding though it is, God allows even a clump of dirt like me to reflect His glory to the world. He actually says that "men will praise God" as a result of my gifts.

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

His glory is the reason we exist. He made us for His own glory, and He saves us for His glory. God is worthy of all praise. He brought everything into being. He sustains everything, and He came to redeem His people with His own life. Everything we are and everything we do ought to bring praise, not to ourselves, but to God.

Recently I was asked at a missions conference if it would not be a good idea to take all the money from fields where very little fruit is seen and give it to others where things are obviously happening. I answered that God is working in both places and that we cannot evaluate missions simply on a business model. His work is invisible, and we should never assume that we are able to see the entire picture.

Amy Carmichael brings this out in a quotation from "the wise and well-loved Robert Wilson of Keswick."

...he stopped near a stone-breaker, who, squatting beside his pile of stones, was hammering steadily.

"I will tell thee a story," the dear old man said, pointing with his whip to the stone-breaker who tapped stolidly on and never looked up. "There was one who asked a stone-breaker at work by the roadside, 'Friend, which blow broke the stone?' And the stone-breaker answered, 'The first one, and the last one, and every one in between.'"

Some of us plant and some of us water, but only God produces the fruit of the harvest (I Corinthians 3:7). All the glory goes to God because all the glory belongs to Him.

alone. Only He can turn hearts from stone to flesh and change men from lovers of self to lovers of God. When we give a faith promise, we are not giving to a missionary, but to God. The second reason we give is to be a blessing to others. The Apostle John tells us that God is love. He is a dispenser of love, not a consumer of love. As we grow in grace, especially in our stewardship, we have the privilege of reflecting the nature of our heavenly Father. He wants us to love the world that He loves.

I love the story of the American businessman who was visiting Korea some years ago and observed an old man and a young man plowing a rice paddy by hand.

“They must be very poor,” the businessman said to his host. “No, they are rich,” replied the missionary. “You see, some members in their church had nothing, so they sold their only ox and gave the earnings to their poor friends. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves.”

“What a sacrifice!”

“They did not call it a sacrifice,” said the missionary. “They only said it was a wonderful that they had an ox to sell.”

We also give in order to serve Christ. Jesus left us the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), the command to go into all the world and make disciples for Him, as His last words on earth. He ascended into heaven only after He had triumphantly finished all that He came to accomplish on earth. With His final words, He turned to the Church and put us to work. “I am finished; how you begin.”

And what are we to do? We are to be involved in every way we can to tell others about the good news of Christ’s redeeming love. I often say that God’s arena has no spectators and no bench. Every player, even the most inconspicuous, has a significant position in the game.

Every year our missions organization has a children’s project in which youngsters bring a gift of their own money, usually for ministry to other children somewhere in the world. It is quite obvious that this collection would never come near meeting the budget of our missions activities, but I believe God is greatly pleased by this activity. Little ones are learning of their worth in God’s kingdom. They are developing habits of generosity that may continue for a lifetime as they learn to serve the One who said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14)

Finally, we give out of gratitude. Look at what God has done for us! He gave us life; then He sanctified His own life so that we could have eternal life. The song of our heart is to be,

Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. -Psalm 100:3

Nothing compares to the joy of giving to the One who gave us everything.

PRAYER:

Father in heaven, You are the source of everything that I have. Help me not to build up treasures here on earth, but to be more concerned about treasures in heaven. Clean up my heart in order that I may wish no glory to come to me. May I bring glory to You through my giving. Teach me to serve others and to really care for them as much as I

care for myself. Give me a thankful spirit for all You have done for me, and let thanksgiving be the source of my faith promise commitment. Amen.

QUESTIONS:

Why is it so hard to focus on glorifying God?

What has God done for you that you are particularly thankful for?

Consider your faith promise and your service for Christ. Pray that God will bring the realities in the questions above together in your life.

Whenever we turn toward God our lives begin to bless others.

-David W. Shenk

I guess that going to more receptive people to the exclusion of less receptive people might be a bargain for missions dollars if we think that we can purchase people for money. But we can't purchase people to be saved. We can only proclaim the gospel and hope that some will be saved. If it were possible to win people with money, then we would spend all our time raising money to pay the ransom - but this is a ransom that Jesus already paid!

-Jews for Jesus