

WHAT GOOD STEWARDS KNOW ABOUT GIVING (1 Chron. 29:1–17)

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There is a story told about Ivan the Great who ruled Russia as Czar in the 15th century. He was a warrior, a fighter, and a conqueror of kingdoms. Ivan was so busy doing battle that some of his comrades became concerned because he hadn't taken time to get married and have a family. They came to him and said, "You've got to get married because you've got to have an heir to the throne." But Ivan said "I want to do battle and to conquer more territory, you go find a wife for me." So they did.

Ivan's men found a wife for him: the daughter of the king of Greece. They said to Ivan, "We found a wife for you, but there's one problem." "What's that?" he asked. "If you're going to marry her, you have to be Greek Orthodox," they said. Ivan the Great said, "Well, if you think she'd make a good wife for me, I could be Greek Orthodox."

The king of Greece was thrilled with marital alliance because it meant that Ivan wasn't going to invade his territory. So the Greeks sent tutors to Russia to tutor Ivan and five hundred of his elite soldiers, every one a great warrior. The soldiers required tutoring because Ivan said, "If I'm going to be Greek Orthodox, they're going to be Greek Orthodox."

Finally Ivan and the soldiers went down to Greece for the wedding. But before the marriage, they had to be baptized into the church. It was an incredible sight as thousands of people came to watch Ivan the Great and his five hundred soldiers all waded into the water at one time to be baptized by immersion into their new church.

Five hundred soldiers with full armor and five hundred Greek Orthodox priests were standing in the blue water of the Mediterranean Sea for the baptism, when all of a sudden the king of Greece said, "We've got a problem." The problem was that in the Greek Orthodox church you could not be a warrior and a member of the church at the same time.

So they held a diplomatic meeting in the water to ask, "How are we going to work this out?" They came up with a simple answer. Just before the priests immersed the soldiers, each man took out his sword, held it high above the water, and allowed the priest to baptize everything but his sword arm. This came to be known as "the unbaptized arm."

Many of God's children today have unbaptized checkbooks. They have dedicated every part of their life to God except their money. As someone once said: "The last thing to be converted is our pocketbook."

Why is that? I believe that Christians fail to dedicate their checkbooks to Christ because they believe one or more myths about money and giving:

Myth 1: My money and possessions belong to me.

Myth 2: I can't afford to give. If I give, I'll go in the hole financially.

Myth 3: My attitude toward money and giving has no relationship to my spiritual growth and life.

Myth 4: If I give my money to the Lord's work, I'll feel a sense of loss and sadness.

1 Chronicles 29 records an event at a time in the history of Israel when their spiritual life was at its peak. The main character is King David, at this time an old man who is transferring the royal scepter to his son Solomon. He has had a passion for many years to build a magnificent temple for the Lord.

Up to this time, the worship of Yahweh was centered around a special tent, the tabernacle. God told David that because he had been a man of bloodshed, he would not be allowed to build the temple. Solomon his son would have that privilege.

In our text, we have the story of the day that David called a national assembly and challenged the people to give generously to the building of the temple. This is an inspiring story of God's people giving generously to His work.

Here, God teaches four lessons on giving to His work. These are lessons that we in the twenty-first century church desperately need to learn and apply. Let's look at them.

I. WHEN WE GIVE TO THE WORK OF GOD, WE ARE NOT GIVING TO MAN, BUT TO GOD (1 Chron. 29:1).

A. David said that the work of building the temple was a great work, because it wasn't being built for man, but for the worship and the glory of God.

B. In our New Testament era, we aren't involved in building a literal temple, but a spiritual one, the church of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:16–17; Eph. 4:21).

C. When we support the local church, we are building a spiritual temple.

We do that...

1. As God uses us to lead people to faith in Jesus and to join the church fellowship. And as people grow spiritually, we are building God's spiritual temple.

2. When you give money to the ministry of this church, you are contributing to the building of a spiritual temple in which God is worshipped and glorified.

B. God also wants you and me to give to the work of His church with all of our ability.

II. GOD WANTS US TO GIVE GENEROUSLY TO HIS WORK (1 Ch. 29:2–5a, 14a).

A. David and the people of Israel gave generously to the temple work.

1. King David gave an enormous fortune (1 Chron. 29:2–5a).

a. 3000 talents of gold = almost \$4 billion

b. 7,000 talents of silver = \$64 million

B. David also recognized that what he had came from the Lord. V.14b – “For all things come from you, and of your own have we given to you.”

C. Generous giving is a major principle of New Testament giving also.

1. The church in Macedonia (1 Cor) was very poor. Yet they gave generously.

a. To give generously means to give with an open heart, with a free and open attitude toward giving.

- b. To give generously also means to give with an open hand, with as large a gift as you can give.
- c. God also wants you and me to give to the work of His church with all of our ability.

III. GOD WANTS US TO GIVE WILLINGLY TO HIS WORK (v. 6–9,17; 2 Cor. 9:7).

A. The writer of this passage places great emphasis on the *willingness* with which the people gave to the temple. They gave out of a sincere desire to give.

B. The New Testament makes it very clear that this is a principle of giving that is important to God.

2 Cor. 9:7: "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver."

A mother wanted to teach her daughter a moral lesson. She gave the little girl a quarter and a dollar for church "Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself," she told the girl. When they were coming out of church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given. "Well," said the little girl, "I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man in the pulpit said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave the quarter, so I did."

ILLUSTRATION: Would you be pleased with a Christmas gift that you had to force your child to purchase for you? Neither is God pleased with offerings that you give to Him reluctantly and resentfully. We think of God's example...
(Gospel Application)

IV. WHEN WE GIVE TO GOD'S WORK WILLINGLY AND GENEROUSLY, WE WILL EXPERIENCE GREAT JOY (1 Chron. 29:9,17).

A. David and his people rejoiced greatly after they had given willingly and generously. Joy was a result of having given to God's work.

B. You will never know all the joy possible to you in life until you begin to give to God as you should. Why? Because God is a God who loves to give, and He created you with the need to give, so that when you give you feel joy.

CONCLUSION

1. Someone once defined stewardship as "what I do after I say I believe."
2. Proper stewardship of money is my grateful response to all that God has done for me in Christ Jesus our Lord, and grateful for what He has given to me.
3. Take a moment now to evaluate yourself: How good a steward have you been?
4. Based on the teaching of God's word this morning, are you willing to take your checkbook and baptize it? Are you willing to consecrate even your wallet to Christ's service?

"Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord." May we go and do likewise. God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.