

Stewardship

IN A BOOK CALLED GROWING INTO LIGHT, MAX LONG WRITES ABOUT A LEATHERY OLD WESTERNER WHO CALLED HIMSELF DESERT PETE. Living out in the sun-beaten country where water is so very precious, Desert Pete wrote a note, put it in a baking-powder can and wired it to an old pump.

Here is what he wrote:

Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water; out of the sun, cork end up. There's enough water in it to prime this pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one fourth, and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour the rest medium fast and pump. You'll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller.

Desert Pete

P.S. Don't go drinking up the water first. Prime the pump with it...I've give my last dime away a dozen times to prime the pump of my prayers, and I've fed my last beans to a stranger while a'sayin' "Amen." It never failed yet to git me an answer. You've got to git "Your Heart Fixed To Give" before you can be give to.

Desert Pete in his own special style was teaching the same lesson that Jesus taught. "Give," said our Lord, "and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you

give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:38). Mark adds, "...and still more will be given you." (Mark 4:24).

Have you ever met anyone who really had his "heart fixed to give," who did not testify that he was the one who benefited by the giving? Think about that as we consider giving to our Lord's work through your church. It is in giving that we truly receive. ☪

TITHING TEACHES

Tithing teaches the happy virtue of gratitude. We tend to think of ourselves as "self-made." We forget that all we have, we have received. Tithing changes the attitude, too, for tithing is an acknowledgment that "it is God that hath made us and not we ourselves." (Psalms 100:3)


The person who tithes is saying "Thank you" to God for health, food, family, love and life. Tithing teaches that the love of God is the creative factor in every person's life.



"IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO HURT"

I know why people turn various shades of red when the pastor gets up on a given Sunday and talks about their stewardship - especially that part of our stewardship we call our "treasure." Let me tell you why:

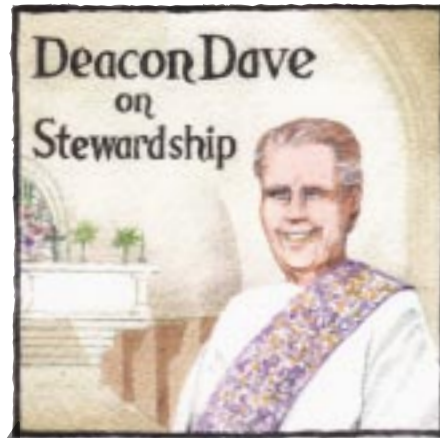
When you go to the doctor for a routine physical exam, you are asked to take off your shirt or blouse. Once you do, the physician begins pressing and probing and poking all around your chest and back. Usually it's not a big problem - just a little ticklish or annoying. Then, all of a sudden, the doctor begins to strike out for new territory and presses on a new area of your body. Just as suddenly you flinch and blurt out "ouch!" The physician gets a surprised look on his face, obviously puzzled by your reaction. You can see it all over his face. The doctor says, "I'm sorry, but I have to probe that area again. I promise to be careful and gentle," and begins poking and probing all over again. This time is more gentle, but when the doctor hits the same area you grimaced over, sure enough, once again you recoil, flinch, and let out a little louder, "ouch!!" The physician says, "I'm sorry I had to do that, Mr. Doe, but it's not supposed to hurt there!" That part isn't supposed to be sensitive!

Likewise, when your pastor speaks to you from God's word about your treasure - about the way you manage all the gifts God has given you. When the pastor touches on returning to God a portion of what God has given you to manage and take care of, it's not supposed to be sensitive there! What might it say about us when the pastor talks about our stewardship, and we yell, "Ouch?" YOU KNOW, JESUS SAID THAT IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO HURT THERE! 

VOLUNTARISM

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

We are borne out in Jesus' life and his death on the cross, and have served down through the centuries as the impetus for disciples of Christ to give of their time and talent to many varied ministries.



WORKING CAPITAL

I remember a dear friend of mine who was always able to see in every problem not an occasion for trouble, but a "golden opportunity." Look about your life right now and ask yourself: What opportunities am I overlooking or missing?

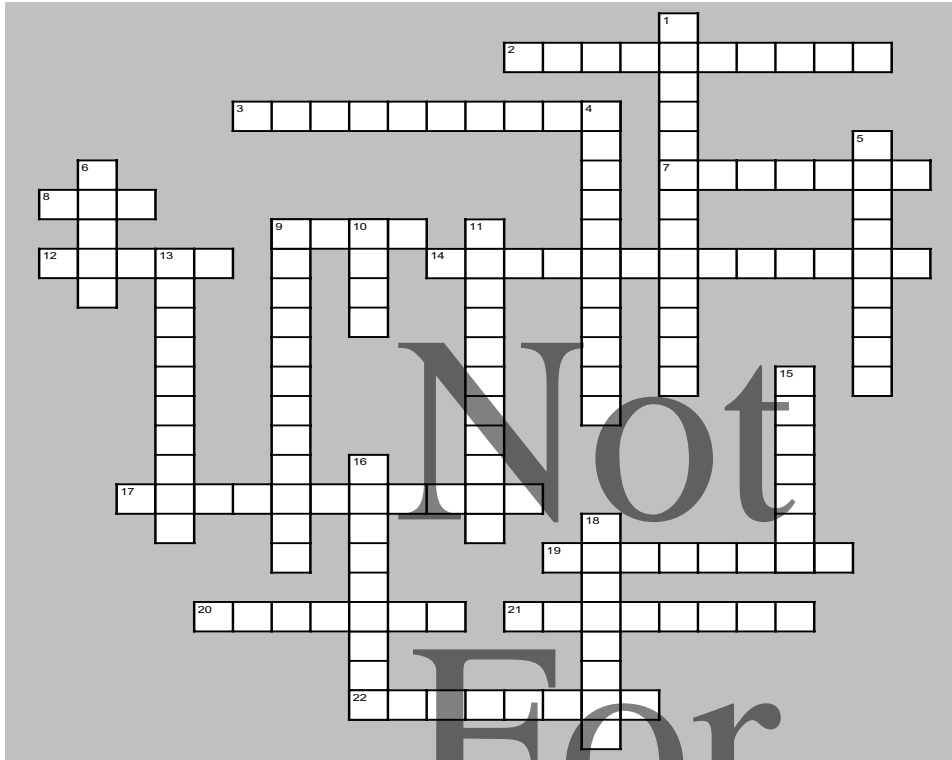
God raised Christ with newness of life, which says to us that God is not content to simply shrug his heavenly shoulders and say of us "well, what could I have expected of such people." Rather he chose a unique, new beginning that unleashed all manner of power and creative actions into this world. Once more not a defeat, but an occasion for growth! This is the recurring theme of the New Testament. Just at the point when we think all is lost and nothing is going to improve, God surprises us with a new opportunity.

The key, of course, is our response. Shall we be like those who are always ready and willing to join the large ranks of scoffers and the "I told you so" crowds? Or shall we say "I see here a chance to grow with God"? The tug of the "what might have been...if only" idea is strong, but must be overcome by a good, large dosage of ... "what new opportunities do I see in today's world."

I am certain that God is working within the events of today and that God is always gracious and giving to use us as we respond faithfully. Like the

(Continued on page 4)

STEWARDSHIP CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Courtesy: Christopher Sealey

Across

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| 2. Ours must be aligned with the will of God. | 9. Created by God for us. | 19. Is properly managed by a steward. |
| 3. Our giving needs to be this. | 12. God's best gift to us. | 20. Husband who was an unfaithful steward. |
| 7. Withholding what belongs to God. (Mal 3:8, 9) | 14. Desiring what does not belong to me. | 21. This type of steward pleases God. |
| 8. Owner of everything. | 17. The result of following God's will. | 22. Wife who was an unfaithful steward. |

Down

1. Giving according to what we receive.
4. Commended by Paul for their stewardship.
5. The things we hold dear to us.
6. God puts these in the purse of unfaithful stewards. (Hag. 1:6)
9. Defines the attitude of a steward.
10. Widow's gift.
11. The things God has given to us.
13. This type of steward displeases God.
15. Defines the life of a steward.
16. Promised to faithful stewards. (Mal. 3:10)
18. Divine use for our gifts.

BEHIND THE SCENES: HIDDEN HANDS WORKING

Have you ever seen a puppet show? Children bubble over with giggles at the puppets' antics during comedy. They shout advice during an adventure. Of course, young audiences don't care about the performers behind the stage. The puppets appear to have a life of their own, and so the children don't think about the hands inside them.

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- Crossword Answers**
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| 1. Proportionate | 2. Priorities | 3. Systematic | 4. Corinthians | 5. Treasures | 6. Holes | 7. Robbery | 8. God | 9. Time | 10. Jesus | 11. Possessions | 12. Jesus | 13. Unfaithful | 14. Covetousness | 15. Service | 16. Blessings | 17. Fulfillment | 18. Ministry | 19. Finances | 20. Ananias | 21. Faithful | 22. Sapphira |
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OUR FAITH JOURNEY


Our faith journey can be helped by our seeing, understanding and accepting our stewardship. We affirm our faith by our actions. Those actions are the use of our gifts and our talents and are, thus, acts of stewardship. The deeper and stronger our faith, the more consistently we will perform acts of charity, peace and freedom that build the kingdom of God on Earth.



“Behind the scenes: Hidden Hands Working.”

continued from page 2:

WORKING CAPITAL

proverbial bus, don't worry, if you missed the last one, there will always be another coming along. See the excitement that God has built into your life and say a hearty “Yes” to the opportunities for joy, life and goodness God sets before you. 

continued from page 3:

BEHIND THE SCENES...

Church activities

Similarly, many of us forget the hidden hands behind many church activities. It's all too easy to forget the members of the congregation who volunteer to clean the sanctuary the day before so it's ready for the beautiful music and powerful words of worship. It's all too easy to attend spaghetti dinners and pancake suppers, forgetting those in the kitchen preparing food or washing dishes. It's all too easy to pray for shut-ins, forgetting those who take the time to write or visit them. All too easy, because so often it's the same people performing all of these tasks. Our lives are made of time. God's most precious gift was Jesus' time on Earth. Surely spending time doing what the church needs – behind the scenes – is a vital part of saying “Thank You” to God. 