

What is stewardship?

The Bible teaches that God is the Creator of all things. This has two implications for how we live. First, it means that God is generous. Not only did he create a beautiful universe, he generously shares his creation with all humanity. Jesus said that God makes the sun to shine and rain to fall on the just as well as the unjust. Elsewhere scripture says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." Second, because God is the Creator, everything belongs to him. Therefore, we have been given the task of managing, or stewarding, everything in our possession. We control our material wealth in the same way a hedge fund manager controls the assets he or she has been given. We must ask how God wants us to manage our money.

How should I steward my wealth?

While stewardship includes more than money, it does not include less. In the Old Testament, believers were required to give a tenth of their income for the support of the Temple and the needs of the poor. While the New Testament does not teach at length on the subject of tithing, Jesus encourages people to continue the Old Testament practice (Matthew 23:23). We are also told that we should give as we are "able and even beyond (our) ability" (2 Corinthians 8:3). Jesus teaches that our relationship to wealth should be far more radical and generous than that of the Old Testament when he reminds us, his followers, that God was "pleased" to give us the kingdom (something God's followers in the Old Testament longed for) which, Jesus says, should liberate us to "sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:33-34). Therefore, the tithe (10%) is seen as a guideline for giving for those of us who "have been given the kingdom".

Should I give all of my tithe/offering to Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church?

Giving is an act of personal worship to God in response to his grace in our lives. God prioritizes the church over everything else. "therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10). Furthermore, the church is the only community established by God – through which all aspects of his kingdom values are to be lived out. If you consider LCPC your "home church", then consider allocating your tithe and offering to the community where you invest most of your time and talent – and where others are investing in you and your family.

After supporting the work of your local church, give generously to all people – particularly those who are intentionally advancing the work of God's kingdom.

Do I give 10% of my gross or net income?

Scripture teaches that we are to give back to God our “first fruits” (Exodus 23: 16, 19). Proverbs 3:9 encourages us to ‘honor the Lord with (our) wealth, with the first fruits of (our) crops’. This is consistent with our understanding that we are first and foremost citizens of God’s kingdom, seeking to invest our resources (time, talents, money) in ways that are consistent with God’s values and priorities. This is what Jesus meant when he asked us to think first of investing our wealth “where no thief comes near and no moth destroys”. Therefore, it is biblical to calculate tithe and offering on annual gross income.

My giving doesn’t currently reflect this teaching. How do I get there from here?

Giving is meant to be joyful response to God’s grace. St. Paul asked for money by saying, “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:8-9). Paul also directed the Corinthians to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he came and received it, in this case, for the relief of famine victims in Palestine. In other words, it is good to have a plan.

Consider evaluating your heart with respect to money. What do you enjoy spending money on? What percentage of your income is going to support the work of the church, other Christian ministries and those in need? How close is it to 10%? Read Matthew 6: 19-34, Timothy 6: 6-10, 2 Corinthians 8: 1-5, 9:6-15. Do you need to adjust your giving in light of biblical values, in terms of eternal investments?

Evaluate the use of your “non-liquid” resources – time, talent, energy, home.

Do you have a regular plan for giving? Whenever money comes in, set aside the Lord’s portion first, with the understanding that it is his, not yours. Remember, the more we trust God with our material treasure, the more he will entrust us with spiritual treasure (See Luke 16: 9-12 and 2 Corinthians 9: 10-12).

Information adapted from material used by Park Slope Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York