

# Graceful Generosity

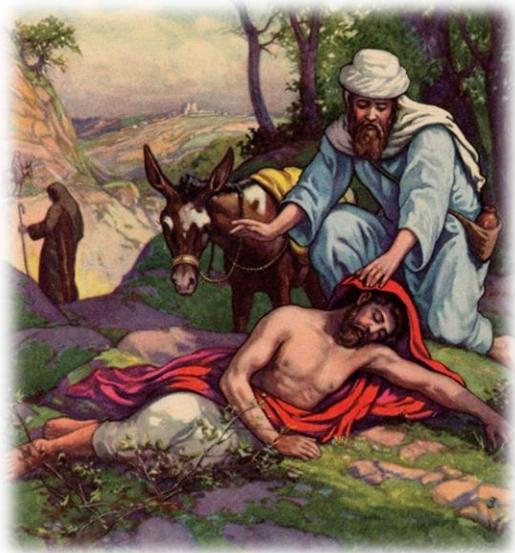
Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

## Understanding Stewardship

- † The motive for Christian stewardship is love and gratitude.
- † The purpose is to glorify God.
- † The guide is the revealed will of God.
- † The efficiency is the power of God's grace.

## Testing your Knowledge of Scripture

Can you identify who the following person may represent in Scripture?



If you said the Good Samaritan, you were right. In the story of the Good Samaritan found in the tenth chapter of Luke, the Good Samaritan not only helped an injured person, he took him to an inn where he paid for his room and care. The Samaritan sacrificed money, time, and possessions for the wounded person, and he risked his own health and safety. He fulfilled the Golden Rule. By putting no limits on how far he was willing to go to help this stranger, the Samaritan demonstrated the love we should have for our neighbors. He followed Jesus' command to *"Go and do likewise."* Helping others may mean more than calling 911.

We may need to get involved, get our hands dirty, and go the extra mile.

## A Stewardship Thought

The God-pleasing steward is motivated by God's love to "surrender" his stubborn, independent, vain, selfish will and begin to conform to God's will. Living for self becomes secondary because Christ who died for him and rose again is now in control. *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will"* (Romans 12:2). The Lord's will becomes our will.

## On the Lighter Side

The day the church treasurer resigned, the church asked the local grain elevator manager to take the position. He agreed under two conditions:

- † That no treasurer's report would be given for the first year.
- † That no questions be asked about finances during that year.

The people were surprised but finally agreed, since most of them did business with him and he was a trusted man. At the end of the year he gave his report:

- † The church indebtedness of \$228,000 has been paid.
- † The minister's salary has been increased by 8%.
- † The Cooperative Program gifts (\$200) have been paid.
- † There are no outstanding bills.
- † There is a cash balance of \$11,252!

Immediately the shocked congregation asked, "How did you do it? Where did the money come from?"

He quietly answered, “Most of you bring your grain to my elevator. Throughout the year, I simply withheld ten percent on your behalf and gave it to the church in your name. You didn’t even miss it!”

“Do you see what we could do for the Lord if we were all willing to give at least the tithe to God, who really owns it?” he asked. And so the new treasurer had made his point.

### **Giving an Opportunity or Obligation**

As the Apostle Paul traveled to churches, he collected offerings for the Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing hard economic times. When Paul was speaking to the Corinthians, he used the Macedonian believers as an example of people who, in spite of their own economic troubles, gave joyfully to the people in Jerusalem. The Macedonians’ love for Christ and their concern for their fellow believers moved them to give beyond their ability. The Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord, and then, Paul said, they *“urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints”* (2 Corinthians 8:4). In Christ, they saw their giving as an opportunity



to help other believers in need.

Does someone who views giving as an obligation plead for the opportunity to give? Probably not. When giving is an obligation, we will give, but giving as an obligation will not give us the joy or the attitude of pleading for the privilege to give that the Macedonians had. As God’s people, we have both an obligation and an opportunity. Scripture is clear that we are called to give. Paul said:

***“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:2).***

Giving is an obligation, but, just as God changed the hearts and minds of the Macedonian people, he changes us so our attitude toward giving can change from being an obligation to an opportunity. As renewed and changed people, our attitude toward giving changes from a “got to” to a “get to” attitude. We stop giving grudgingly, and we start giving willingly and cheerfully. We want to give, because giving is an expression of our love and gratitude to God for who he is and what he does for us.

The more we give of ourselves and our gifts, the closer our relationship with Christ becomes, and the more we want to give, and the more God blesses us which enables our continued giving. *“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God”* (2 Corinthians 9:11). We thank God that he fills us daily with his love so that we as members of his Church here on earth see giving as a privilege and an opportunity to praise and thank him.

***Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!***