

Resources



The Old and New Testaments refer to the importance of caring for the environment, the poor, standing up for justice, supporting the widows and orphans and visiting those in prison etc. Both Jesus and His early followers set an example in this. We are still called to do the same.

Stewardship is not a term commonly used today. A steward has a similar function to that of a trustee. Although trustees don't own property they are nevertheless responsible for the management of it. Christians must likewise use gifts and possessions that have been entrusted to them.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10

Many of us are living in a consumer society where most people think too much about themselves, but so much of God's teaching is counter cultural for instants, Philippians 2:3 *...in humility count others better than yourselves.*

Never forget that we are not saved through 'good works' but our gratitude to God is displayed through our service to others and to the world around us. How we do that depends on the circumstances and need in front of us. The book of James has an overwhelming emphasis on the outworking of faith, demonstrated through good works.

At least three things have been entrusted to believers; time, talents and treasure. Make good use of these possessions.

Time

Each person is given the same amount of time. Twenty four hours each day and 168 hours every week. Depending where we live, it has been suggested that we spend 56 hours every week asleep, use 10 hours travelling to work, 40 hours spent at work, 10 1/2 hours eating our meals, leaving 51 1/2 hours for doing other things. For example preparation of meals etc. Some people spend 30 or more hours watching T.V. each week and gain little worth from it.

Make good use of your time. Sometimes people complain, "I don't have time to do everything I want to do." Occasionally that may be true, but we normally find time to do the things we really want to do.

Ephesians 5:16, Make good use of every opportunity you have, because these are evil days.

Every day live a balanced life. Use your time wisely and think through your priorities before God each morning so that you are not pushed around by everything going on. Take charge of your time.

How can you better use your time?

Talents

We have all been entrusted with special abilities though many of us are unaware of them. Through training and practice you may have developed your gifts depending upon your motivation and the opportunities presented to you.

When you became a Christian you were given spiritual gifts as well. A list of these gifts given to the church by the Holy Spirit are outlined in *Romans 12:6-8*, *1 Corinthians 12:4-11*, *Ephesians 4:11-13* and *1 Peter 4:8-11*. Read about these. Every Christian led by the Spirit has at least one gift and at times any of the gifts may become available to the believer as the need arises.

Sometimes it can be easy to find our natural gift, which may or may not be our spiritual gift. Often it can only be discovered by taking a step of faith and by doing what we really want to do for the Lord, and also by talking to mature Christians about our gifts. You are a unique person so don't copy other people, be yourself! Be the person God made you to be! Many jobs today require an annual job review where your performance is assessed. The purpose of these reviews is not to bring discouragement but to enhance productivity. Talking over our abilities with those we trust may enable us to function best in the right place.

List any spiritual gifts you think you may have

Money

Money is a commodity which can be a blessing, but too much has the potential to be a curse. It is only the '*love of money*' which is the root of

all kinds of evil’ 1 Timothy 6:10, not the money itself. In the Bible giving money can be an act of worship. Few subjects are likely to arouse as much emotional response as that of tithing or giving. People who believe in tithing refer to the teaching in the Old Testament.

The concept of tithing occurred well before the introduction of the Law. For example Abraham gave a tenth (tithe) to Melchizedek, the Priest of the Most High God (Genesis 14:20b). Jacob likewise promised a tenth of his possessions if God cared for him. However, with the passing of time the tithe became an integral part of Israelite society. Certainly, the tithe was used to provide support for the priests and to feed the poor. In time it was required as part of ‘the Law’ (Leviticus 27:30).

Close examination of the New Testament indicates that Jesus nowhere nullified the importance of the tithe. What He was against however, is tithing with a wrong attitude (*Matthew 23:23,24*).

New Testament Church

The writings associated with the New Testament Church never once mention the practice of tithing, although there is a strong emphasis on the importance of giving.

Draw a line to the correct reference.

How should we give?	
Joyfully	1 Corinthians 16:2
Anonymously	2 Corinthians 9:7
Regularly	2 Corinthians 8:2
Sacrificially	Matthew 6:3,4

Many have felt God has honoured them as they sought to give a tithe and more of all that has come to them. God loves a generous giver even though many times it can be difficult to give. Someone has correctly said, "It's not that we can afford to tithe, it's that we cannot afford not to tithe!" There is a lot of truth in that even if you want to change from the word tithing to simply giving!

If you feel you couldn't possibly give 10% of your income, then why not start by giving 5%? Because the Church at Philippi gave generously to Paul, (Philippians 4:15) Paul could then write, *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus* (19). As soon as you acquire your pay put aside what you intend give before God and make sure you give it. Leave it to the end of your pay period and there will be little left to give away!

Don't be governed by the spirit of this age - greed, selfishness and pleasure seeking, but be good stewards of all that God has entrusted to you. If you learn to give, it will be given back to you!

One final word. Psalm 24:1 states *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it*. Christians need to be good stewards of the earth and not exploit it for selfish reasons.