

Stewardship

Count Saint-Exupery was a philosopher, writer, poet, adventurer, and famous flyer. His books are widely read, the most famous of which is *Wind, Sand and Stars*. In it he tells that after World War I, with his flying comrad Guillaumet, he went to South America where the two men secured jobs as pilots carrying the mail over the Andes for the government of Chile.

One day Guillaumet, despite a heavy snowstorm that had closed in most of the sky and reduced visibility, had taken off in the hope of finding an opening in the clouds. To his dismay, he discovered he was trapped within a circle of peaks twenty thousand feet high, and that the great downdrafts were beating him lower. The wings of the plane were icing heavily; the jolts of the turbulence were so terrible that his seat harness threatened to snap, that the plane was being rolled over and under like a hat in the road, from eighteen thousand feet down to ten. Spying a frozen lake at the bottom, he flew around it until the gas was exhausted, and finally was able to set the plane down on the snow.

Because of the fierceness of the storm he dug a shelter beneath his cockpit, lined it with mail bags, and huddled there for two days and nights. Then he emerged to find his way back to civilization, which took him five days and four nights, because he was without ice axe, ropes and food. He had to scale places fifteen thousand feet in the air and crawl on the face of almost vertical slopes, hands and feet bleeding, in a temperature of twenty degrees below zero.

Longing to lie down, the thought of his

wife and sons who would be left penniless if he perished, and his responsibility for the mail, he kept struggling forward with the perseverance of an ant, despite the petrifying cold and agony of his fro-



zen face, hands and feet. He was finally found, but on examination at the nearest hospital it was discovered his hands and feet were so solidly frozen that a double amputation was necessary. Thus he lost the beautiful tools of his livelihood.

Saint-Exupery, brooding over his comrade's awful experience and the dynamism that kept him walking, staggering, and crawling ever forward, summed up his conclusion in a single sentence, "To be a human is, precisely, to be responsible."

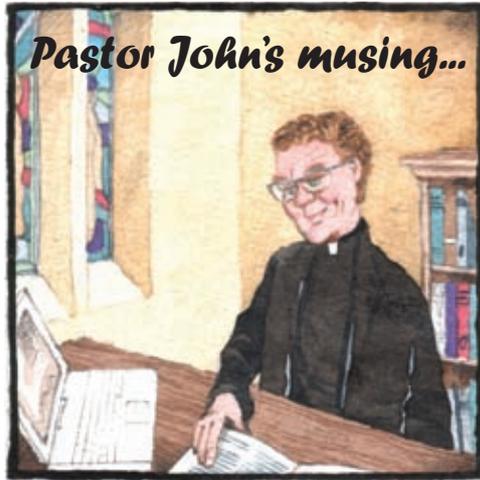
This is an inescapable challenge to everyone at a time of year when the opportunity for commitment of time, service, and money is presented. "To be a Christian, is precisely, to be responsible."



The true setting of Christian stewardship is the gospel of God's redeeming grace, which offers new life in Christ as an unmerited gift and evokes the response of faith that works through grateful love.



Pastor John's musing...



God never condemned money, as such, but rather insisted that it be used according to the will of God, and that it not be allowed to be a stumbling block to one's spiritual progress. There is nothing wrong with possessing money, but there is always the danger that money may possess a person and that it may blind their vision to things spiritual.

It's amazing the attitude about life that giving of yourself to Christ helps you develop. You come to realize that your role in life is as important as anyone's in God's plan.

No matter who you are or what you do ... no matter how menial or meaningless you consider your life's work ... you can achieve greatness in the eyes of God. How? By doing your work to the best of your ability and offering it up to God.

What does God think of me? God's is the only opinion that really matters.

Think of life as something God has given us to manage or take care of.

Everything comes from God.

We may use our talent or ability to achieve material goods, but the talent or ability is a gift from God to begin with. Once you look at life this way, as a stewardship, it becomes clear that we must give of what we are, as well as what we have.

It means cultivating an attitude of generous giving and getting into the habit of thinking of others.

Since we have placed Christ first in our economic life, we have never again relegated him to second place in our everyday life.

We have made a total commitment to love God, and we try to prove it by loving others, by giving of ourselves, and

returning to God a portion of all we receive. God has showered an abundance of blessings on us. Our life has taken on a spirit of adventure and we have experienced a happiness we never before thought possible. 

The great violinist Pablo Sarasate was once called a genius by a famous critic. "Genius!" he snorted. "For 37 years I've practiced 14 hours a day, and now they call me a genius."

God has given each of us one or more special talents: a mechanical bent, a pleasing personality, a creative imagination, a green thumb.

Realism warns us that we can't do everything. Confidence tells us that we can do a great deal. Common sense reminds us that achieving any worthwhile goals demands unrelenting practice. 





Through the Stained Glass...

A friend of mine, a respected priest, was once asked what the two greatest needs in the church were today.

“The first,” he said, “is preaching, the second ... money” He knew that preaching sets forth the word of God, but money enables the work of God.

Without both, God’s Kingdom won’t be furthered much.

To put it another way, the places we make our most serious financial investments, where we spend and give our money, are the places where our real self, our inner self, really is. Where we put our money will be where we are most interested, most teachable, most responsive, most open! To deal with a person in terms of what they do with their money is to deal with most people where they really live.

Financial giving can be an avenue to spiritual growth in a unique way. It can be so if we put ourselves and our money on the line for the Lord’s work because as Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. 

It is always a joy to be a vital part of a worthy victory. You have sensed the needs of this poor, stricken world, grievously vexed by doubts, confusions, anxieties, sorrows, cruelties, and deepening fears

The church, with your help, can change this situation. One institution, the church, is the open channel through which you can work to establish truth, mercy, justice, brotherhood, confidence, faith and love. The church must be victorious! The victory may depend on you!

Steward of the Month

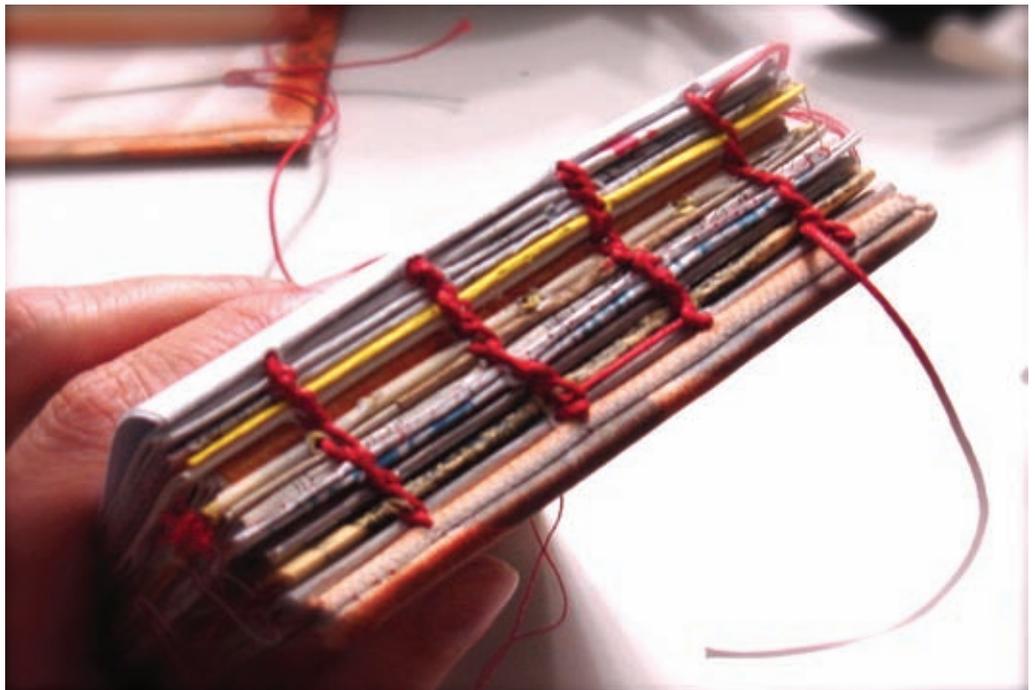
The Budget Book

Submitted by: Pat, Oconomowoc, WI

Long before Quicken existed to help manage personal finances, Tony and Dorothy Kerhin had a small burgundy book that contained about a dozen individual envelopes bound to its spine. Embossed on the cardboard cover of this book was the word “Budget.” This book of envelopes was the method they used to manage the modest income Tony earned as a postal employee. The envelopes were each labeled with one of the family’s financial obligations and expenses. The very first envelope in the budget was labeled “Church.”

On Fridays, Tony would bring his check home and Dorothy would take care of cashing it. She would then divvy the money up into the envelopes. The church envelope was always filled first and it received its full budgeted amount every time. Other envelopes on some of the leaner weeks might not be so lucky. With seven children in the family, unexpected expenses were the norm. Money might be borrowed from one envelope to lend to another, but the church funds would remain untouched until the weekly envelope needed to be filled. They gave the first fruit of Tony’s labor to God and in turn God rewarded their commitment with a life devoid of worries about money.

Tony and Dorothy were my mom and dad. I am still amazed at how they man-
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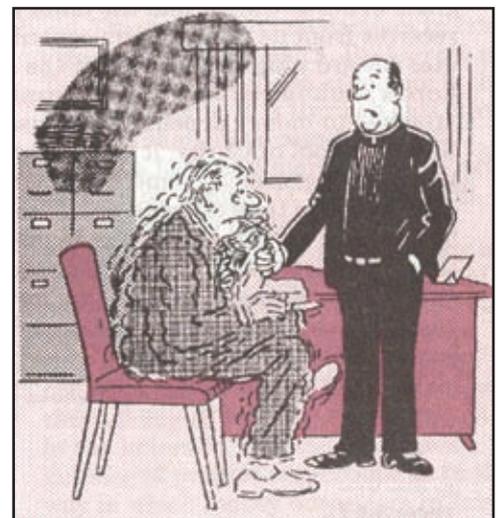


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Steward of the Month

aged to raise our large family on such a meager income, yet always give the first portion to God. Their philosophy was that if God was given his share, there would always be enough for everything and everyone else. I have adopted their budget plan with my computer instead of a red book. No matter what bills there may be, the Sunday envelope receives its pledged amount. And today, too, there is always enough.



“Look, besides the prayer and putting your trust in God, would you like me to go along with you to your tax audit?”

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