

# Stewardship

She was an old woman who dressed in old clothes and lived in a rickety old house. The many years had whittled her down to a frail, tiny frame with wilting muscles and furrowed, pale skin. Still her mind was sharp, her eyes clear and observant, her smile warm and her spirit inviting.

Of course, she was pleased when her pastor came to call. She cheerfully welcomed him, showed him a comfortable chair, chatted a little, then dashed to the kitchen to make tea.

As they sipped, the pastor noted how erect she sat, how kindly she was, and he felt his spirit being lifted as they talked. He was a young man, but he was beginning to learn something that would help him for life. It was this: Those who minister, those who seek to be a blessing to others, discover that they are the ones who are blessed instead.

The pastor had come with a purpose. Someone had called his attention to the fact that the elderly woman had meager resources and it was thought that she had made a pledge to the church considerably beyond her means. That worried him. He thought he should try to ease her financial burden if he could.

As gently as possible, he broached the subject of her giving to the church. Perhaps, he suggested, she was being a bit too generous and that she might want to re-think what she intended to give in the coming year.

Her eyes began to well-up with tears. She searched for a tissue to dab them dry. The pastor thought that they were tears of relief, that she was pleased because he understood her struggle with finances

and her need to conserve more for her own well-being.

He totally misunderstood! It began to become clear to him when she started telling him something of her past history in the church. When she was younger she



had used her talent and energy to serve the church in many ways. She mentioned the committees she had served on, the classes she had taught, the hungry she had help feed, the sick and shut-ins she had loved visiting on behalf of the church. But now, she said, she wasn't strong enough to do much.

Her service was pretty much limited to one thing: giving money so that the ministry of the church could continue. Then she begged the pastor not to take away from her the one thing she could still do.

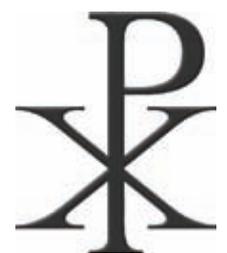
The young man was visibly moved. It was revealed to him that he was in the presence of a saint. He felt humbled and greatly sorrowful that he had tried to remove the most important thing that gave meaning to the dear woman's life.

He left pondering over and over the lesson on giving he had learned. He

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*The joy of sacrificial giving is love. In spite of trials, love emerges as the factor in an individual's happiness.*

*It is the light that distinguishes those people who become good stewards of their time, talent and treasure from others. It is the joy of sacrificial giving.*



## Use Your Talent to God's Glory

**H**ave you heard about the school for animals that was set up in this forest? All the animals decided it was time to set some criteria for who should be allowed to live in the forest, so a number of them came up with a curriculum that included tree climbing, swimming, flying, and running. They decided all animals must pass each of these classes in order to graduate.

Well, the first class was in tree climbing, which of course the squirrels passed with flying colors. The fleet-footed deer, however, flunked the course.

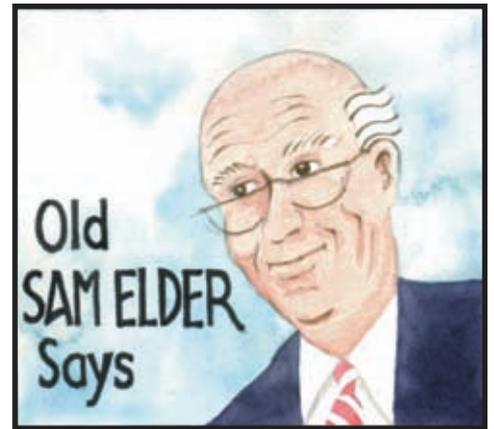
When it came to running, the deer got straight A's, but the geese kept falling over frontwards. Now, in flying, the bald eagle flew circles around the squirrels, who kept falling off the branches onto the ground below.

The point, of course, is clear. God has given each part of his creation a talent according to their ability and that includes humans, as well. We are the ones who have decided that to be talented means that we excel in one of three or four areas and we are willing to pay enormous salaries to those who meet our

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*The most precious gift, always, is the message that you care. There are, in practical terms, only two ways of showing how much you care for a particular cause. One is the amount of work you do for it; the other is the amount of substance you give to it.*



**S**am, you should tell Miss Finney how stupid she looks, putting her lonesome five dollar bill in the collection each Sunday," began Leslie Loudtone. "Doesn't that fool woman know that it costs three times as much to run the church?"

"Les, I'm pleased that you appreciate so well the effects of inflation and what it does to the operation of a church today," answered old Sam Elder, "But there is more to Miss Finney's five dollars than meets the eye."

"Do you mean that she does know about inflation, yet continues to give her five dollars," asked Leslie?

"Of course, but what you should be asking is how does Miss Finney manage to keep giving that amount," explained Sam. "Miss Finney worked all her life in our library for minimum wage and was retired on a starvation pension. Inflation keeps increasing her cost of living, while her income remains about the same."

"I don't like the sound of this," Leslie grumbled. "We could be carrying a lot of people like Miss Finney, who can't carry their weight. It isn't fair to the rest of us!"

"From Christ's viewpoint, it is fair and just," said Sam. "Christ asks that we give, as he has enabled us to give. Miss Finney's five dollars is like the widow's mite; the greater gift, because she has given from her want, while the

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***Loving God, as the sower scattered seeds with the hope of an abundant crop, we commit these tithes and offerings to help grow your Word and ask that their impact in our world may grow a hundred, sixty or thirty times what is sown.***

***We know that our lives are full of weeds, planted by enemies of greed, consumerism and fear. As we commit these gifts to your ministry, help us to separate the first fruits in our lives from the weeds and all that is good in your name from all that which tempts away from you.***

*Matthew 13:1-9, 18-43*

## Steward of the Month

### Wouldn't Be Millionaire

Submitted by: Sue, Seattle, WA

**E**leanor Boyer was a retired buyer of chemicals and office supplies when she won a lump sum of \$11.8 million in the New Jersey lottery. She never had a moment of doubt about what to do with the money. She gave it away; about half of it to the parish in which she worshiped all her life, and the rest to the town rescue squad (erasing its deficit), the volunteer fire department and some of the other groups that serve the town she grew up in.

No new car, no vacation, she said. My life is no different. I've given it up to God. I live in God's presence and do God's will, and I did that from the start.

In an age when people are so driven by material forces, said Ron Czajowski, who was a vice president of the New Jersey Hospital Association, the idea of somebody turning over all that sum of money to the community and to the church is inspiring. It kind of makes you step back and think what our priorities are.

Msgr. Kennedy, pastor of Ms. Boyer's church, said "the church invested some of her gift as an endowment and was buying a new pipe organ. I suggested to Eleanor that the organ could be from her, in memory of her parents, and she went along with that." He said he did not know if she had bought another car to replace the rusting Chevrolet Malibu she owned when she hit the jackpot. But if she did, he said, she probably bought a used one. Ms. Boyer, who was never married and whose closest living relatives are three nephews, said the church is her true home. She taught catechism classes, worked at the church office for ten years and helped count the collection money. 

**W**hat matters to God is not the gift, but the giver. Stewardship is God's invitation to a way of life. It helps make God real to us. It helps us grow. It helps us to overcome our selfishness and our love of things

*We have been given much. To receive and not give is poor stewardship. What we do with what we have been given is a sign to God and to the world of the depth and meaning of our commitment.*



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### **She was an old woman...**

concluded that the heart grateful to God must find a way to express that gratitude. Through prayer, through service as long as possible, and through the giving of one's resources until one hears: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of heaven." ☩

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### **Have you heard about...**

criteria.

God's idea of talents, however, is based on their usefulness to others, not on the number of talents, nor how artistic they are. Not only will we be held accountable for using the talent we have been given, but as importantly, whether we have used it in God's kingdom. ☩

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### **Old Sam Elder...**

rest of us give from our plenty. (Mark 12:42-44).” ☩

