

Radiant Church, August 30, 2015
Mike Rydman

**Gospel Rhythm #6 Fruitfulness - Stewarding God's Grace
2 Corinthians 9**

Here is a scary yet very real truth: people will leave a church for one primary reason - stewardship

Stewardship is: *The careful use, control and management of the possessions of another that have been entrusted to one. The term is also used to refer to the responsible use of wealth and possessions by Christians.*

Biblical examples of stewardship:

Adam in the Garden of Eden Genesis 2:15

Joseph in Potiphar's household Genesis 39:4-6

Daniel as administrator in Babylon Daniel 6:1-3

The priests serving in the tabernacle Leviticus 22:9; 1Samuel 2:15

The seven deacons chosen by the Jerusalem church Acts 6:1-6

Greek-speaking churches giving to the Jewish churches 2 Cor. 9:1-5

What is stewardship for us?

Emphasizing each individual's responsibility: Christians are to be wise stewards of their God-given gifts

Luke 12:48b *everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more*

1Cor. 4:7b *what do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

To be a good steward is an honorable thing and grows our faith

1Timothy 3:13 *for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus*

Christians are entrusted with the stewardship of the gospel

1Cor. 4:1-2 *this is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful*

Stewardship infers increase:

Success often results in pride (the root of sin)

Faithfulness without results often results in hero/martyr outlook
where we see God as having not done enough

I want Radiant Church to be successful, and certainly want us to be faithful;
but Jesus wants us to be fruitful

Bear Fruit:

John 15:8 *by this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples*

2 extremes: prosperity gospel - lack of contentment
poverty gospel - lack of generosity

Fruit of conversions:

Romans 1:13-15 *I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*

Fruit of Godly character:

Galatians 5:22-24 *but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

We are to use our gifts to benefit others

1Peter 4:10-11 *as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace*

We are to develop our gifts

1Timothy 4:14-15 *do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress*

We are to care for our own bodies

1Cor. 6:19-20 *or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

We are to be wise stewards of our material possessions

Deut. 8:17-18 *Beware lest you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the power to get wealth, that He may confirm His covenant that He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*

2 Corinthians 9:6 *the point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

Reap bountifully in what?

2 Corinthians 9:7 *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

The OT had a lot of required sacrifices. The NT really retains only one:

The “Free Will” offering - the response of gratitude to what God gives
The OT offerings had two major end points:

Caring for the needs of others in “the family”
Providing for the tabernacle/temple

If you give, why do you give? If you don’t give, why not?

2 Corinthians 9:8-9 *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.*

The conquering King gets to give gifts to the victors

Jesus gives his gifts, by grace, to the poor (in spirit)...because he is righteous

But why does Jesus give us anything?

So we can have stuff?

Or so we can abound in every good work?

2 Corinthians 9:10 *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.*

It’s already His to give

The seed planter, the bread maker only work with what they’re given

1 Chronicles 29:14 *but who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.*

What does our giving or lack of giving say about what we believe?

It’s a question of perspective: am I an owner, or am I a steward?

2 Corinthians 9:11-15 *you will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

Notice Paul does not guilt them into giving

But he does say:

They are blessed to be a blessing, receiving in order to give

They are to give to meet physical needs

But they are also giving to cause thanksgiving

The Jewish Christians will be encouraged by the obedience of the
Gentile Christians - they will see the gift as an expression of
the Gospel - that the gospel has changed their lives

Some thoughts on all this:

Some of us are generous. Others of us are not

Our giving is an evidence of our hearts for Christ and His Church

If you do give, ask yourself why you give? Guilt? Peer pressure?

Gratitude? How does your giving reflect your view of the gospel?

Can we grow in the grace of the gospel if we are not generous in
giving to the life and mission of our church?

Is it possible to be grow in grace if we are content to be takers
instead of givers?

What would it mean, and what will it take for Radiant Church to be
fruitful?

Malachi 3:6-12 *for I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, How shall we return? Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, How have we robbed you? In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.*

God promises to meet all their needs, though not all their greeds

Why? So that the other nations would call them blessed, a land of delight

So other people will be drawn to Jesus by what they see in us

Can Radiant Church be the blessed, delightful “nation” in the midst of our culture?