

HIGHER IDEALS  
*OF*  
CHRISTIAN  
STEWARDSHIP

*by*  
DON O. SHELTON



Second Edition  
*revised and enlarged*

**HIGHER IDEALS OF  
CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP**

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**Personal Work and the Personal Worker.** Second edition, revised and enlarged. An attractive booklet for general distribution among Christian young men. Single copies, 5 cents; per dozen, 50 cents.

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DON O. SHELTON

—  
"My aim never was how much I could obtain,  
but rather, how much I could give."  
—GEORGE MÜLLER.

—  
SECOND EDITION

*revised and enlarged*  
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On his last birthday but one, far from friends and in the jungles of Africa, David Livingstone wrote in his diary: "My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All, I again dedicate *my whole self* to Thee."

## Higher Ideals of Christian Stewardship

**W**HETHER he recognizes the fact or not every Christian in the sight of God is a steward. He has been entrusted with gifts, talents, and probably money, for the use of which he shall be required to give account.

That many have not high ideals of stewardship there is abundant proof. The yearly contributions of over thirteen million evangelical Protestant church members in the United States averaged only eighty-six cents per member for both home and foreign missions, and out of the abundant wealth possessed by these church members only one thirty-second of one per cent. was given in an entire year for Christian work in foreign

lands. The whole sum contributed was \$10,695,259. Had each person given on an average one cent a day the total would have been \$48,950,150.



The loud appeals for financial help to carry the gospel to the unsaved at home and in non-Christian lands, and the need everywhere visible for enlarged rather than restricted evangelistic enterprises show that there is urgent need of a revival of the sense of stewardship among Christian people and especially among young men.

I say particularly among young men, for they are now the wage earners and will be the capitalists and successful business men of the new century upon which we have entered.

What, therefore, is the duty of every Christian man in relation to the gifts—time, talents, and money—God has bestowed upon him?

1. To gain a knowledge of the teaching of the Scripture on stewardship.

2. To meditate on and believe in the promises of God to faithful stewards.

3. By personal obedience to the commands of God to be a living epistle on the subject of Christian stewardship.

4. To determine what means may profitably be used for the development of higher ideals of stewardship in others.

5. To let the prospective results of a practical acknowledgment of his accountability to God spur him on to more constant and faithful effort.

I.

What is the standard which the Scripture sets before all who would be faithful stewards of God's gifts? Our Master said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Again: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." And again: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." In the parable of the rich man we have an example of one whose chief thought was of earthly possession. "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night

Matthew vi. 19, 20.

Matthew vi. 33.

Luke xii. 15.

Luke xii. 16-21.

thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" "So," said Christ, "is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." It is clear that our Lord teaches, in these and other passages, the futility of laying up earthly treasures; that He would not have His disciples accumulate money for the gratification of their own lust for gain. Instead, He commands that treasures be laid up in heaven; that His people seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.



These commands relate not only to one's personal salvation, but also to one's personal obligation to devote his possessions to the extension of Christ's kingdom. One who lives according to this teaching will recog-

nize that he is but a tenant, while God is the proprietor of all that he has. He will follow his business, his profession, his trade, not only as a means of livelihood, but that he may have wherewith to better serve God. The intention of such an one will be to please God in everything and to give to His service the utmost possible of his time, strength and money.<sup>1</sup>



But of how many of the Christian people of this nation is it true that their chief intent is not to lay up for themselves treasures upon earth? How many subordinate dress, pleasure, the attainment of social position and their commercial interests to the welfare of the Kingdom of God?



In respect to the observation of the

<sup>1</sup> SEE NOTE A, page 26.

commandments of Christ, just cited, John Wesley said the heathen of his time had far the pre-eminence of the Christians of England. "How do the Christians observe what they profess to receive as a command of the most high God?" he asked. "Not at all," said he. "Not in any degree; no more than if no such command had ever been given to man. Even the good Christians, as they are accounted by others as well as themselves, pay no manner of regard thereto. It might as well be hid in its original Greek, for any notice they take of it. In what Christian city do you find one man of five hundred who makes the least scruple of laying up just as much treasure as he can,—of increasing his goods just as far as he is able to?" No unusual vision is needed to see a similar condition existing in our time. In the mad rush

for wealth many seem entirely to disregard the standard set before them in the Scripture.



Should we then be amazed at our weakness? Should we marvel that the evils of drink, licentiousness and Sabbath desecration are rapidly increasing among young men? Is there cause for wonder that the fires of God are dying out in many a place? So long as the professed followers of Christ live selfishly; so long as they are to a great degree conformed to this world we cannot expect the Church to become the evangelizing agency which God designed it to be. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that we set the Master's standard of stewardship clearly and constantly before ourselves and before all Christian men.

## II.

Our sense of obligation to develop in ourselves and others a high ideal of stewardship will deepen as we meditate on and believe in the promises of God to *faithful* stewards. Our Lord said: "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Paul writes: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." There are many other promises equally direct, but these will suffice. God is the recompenser, He is the believer's paymaster, and He promises to give to us according to our sowing. George Müller, of Bristol, England,—whose long period of faithful stewardship was one of the glories of the last

Luke vi. 38.

2 Corinthians  
ix. 6.

century—gives this striking testimony to the faithfulness of Christ: "I have moved among children of God above forty-eight years; I have become acquainted with many thousands of them, and I have known very many who sowed, and sowed bountifully, and I have not yet met with one single instance in which, even as to this life, the Lord has not acted according to His word, so that as the sowing was, so was the reaping." Shall we not let the promises of our Lord and the witness of His faithful servant quicken us personally to new faith and to stricter obedience?



The call comes directly to each of us. We are each accountable to God for the use we make of his bestowments. Though one's income may be small he is to so use it as to lay up as

much treasure as possible in heaven. His aim should be, not to see how much he can save, but how much he can give.



We readily acknowledge the present standard of giving to be very low among believers generally. Is it not also low among ourselves? Can we expect to develop higher ideals in others if we ourselves do not possess a high ideal? A question for each to answer is, What sort of a living epistle am I on the subject of Christian stewardship? Unless we are liberal, unless we really seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, we shall not have the power to persuade others to dedicate their all to the service of Christ. It is required of us *that we be faithful*. Let us therefore seek

1 Corinthians  
iv. 2.

grace to devote the largest possible percentage of our income and possessions to the extension of the Kingdom of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Alexander MacLaren has eloquently said: "Giving is essential to the completeness of Christian character. It is the crowning grace, because it is the practical manifestation of the highest excellences. It is the result of sympathy, unselfishness, of contact with Christ, of drinking in of His spirit. This grace is like the diamond which clasps a necklace of jewels." Christ gave ALL for us, and it should be our pleasure to give Him our best, not alone because He deserves our best, but because He has called us to be lights in the world for Him.



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<sup>1</sup> SEE NOTE B, page 27.

### III.

Living for God instead of self, giving liberally of our means as He opens the way, we may use a variety of methods to develop in others higher ideals of stewardship. Doubtless the most effective method is the personal unfolding of the teaching of Christ. Faithful expositions of Scripture passages relating to stewardship, given in the power of the Holy Spirit, will bear fruit. Christ's words are arrows which go straight to the mark when spoken by one energized by the Spirit of God. We have a right on every suitable opportunity to appeal to those whom we teach to give liberally to Christ, for such giving will marvelously enrich their souls and bring them into closer fellowship with Him. We may urge the highest of motives, such as: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was

<sup>2</sup> Corinthians  
viii. 9.

rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."



The essential thing is that Christian men be persuaded to begin their giving in a conscientious, systematic and persistent way.<sup>1</sup> If we would quicken the consciences of men on this important subject we must be enthusiastic agitators. The habit of giving promptly and steadily is not easily formed and therefore patience and constancy are needed on the part of all who would lead others to give of their means unto the Lord.



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<sup>1</sup> SEE NOTE C, page 28.

#### IV.

The prospective results of a practical acknowledgment of our accountability to God should lead us to greater faithfulness.

Among such results three may be mentioned:—

1. "It transfers our responsibility to God, because we give according to the way God prospers us."

2. There will be a great spiritual gain. The more faithful we become as stewards, the more Christlike we shall be. Only as we overcome selfishness, covetousness, the love of money, can we abide in Christ and have His spirit abiding in us. "If John xv. 10. ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." If the motive of our giving be obedience to

the commands of Christ, we shall abide in His love.<sup>1</sup>

3. There will be a temporal gain. The promises of Christ assure us that as we give our income shall be increased so that we shall be better able to give.

A superb illustration of this truth is the experience of George Müller. When he began his life of faith, he gave up a stated salary as pastor, having resolved to depend entirely upon God for his personal income as well as for the needs of his orphanage. The first year, 1831, the amount sent in for his personal use in answer to prayer (and he *never* asked a human being for financial help) was £151. Of this amount he gave back to the Lord £50. The next year his income was slightly increased, and he gave away more than the previ-

<sup>1</sup> SEE NOTE D, page 20.

ous year. Each succeeding year for forty-three years witnessed a gradual increase in the sum sent him, until in 1873, forty-two years after he began to count himself God's steward, he received for his individual needs £2,770, or about \$13,300. During this entire period he says that by the grace of God he made it a rule to *give* as much as he could, and the total amount which he *gave away* was £27,179 (over \$130,000), or more than two-thirds of all he had received. "All whom ever I have known," says he, "who carried out these principles, were happy in doing so, *were prospered by God, were owned by God*; but then there must be persevering reality. It is not *for* attending to these things that we obtain the blessing, but *in* attending to them." Shall not we, who believe that Christ is always a rewarder of

them that follow Him in faith and obedience, take to heart these most encouraging facts?

It cannot be questioned that one of the important duties devolving upon us, is the leading of men to understand that all they are and have should be devoted unselfishly to the glorifying of Christ. Taught by the Spirit of God, impelled by the love of God, we have opportunity to prove our faithfulness, by setting before ourselves and our friends our Master's ideal of stewardship. In proportion as that ideal is reached there will come into our Christian work new life, new activity, new love for the souls of men.

Great is the opportunity! If we confine our view to only one agency of the Church of Christ,—the Young Men's Christian Association,—we find that, estimated at the very low rate

of \$10.00 per week each, excluding the student members, the ninety-eight thousand active members of this organization in North America have a total yearly income of over *fifty millions of dollars!*

\* \*

Let us therefore seek wisdom from above, that we may escape the snares of selfishness and love of money. By patience, by much prayer and tactfulness, we have the high privilege of coming to the Word of God that we may obtain a true vision of what the life of a Christian man should be. All who obediently respond to that heavenly vision and all who are not conformed to this world, but are transformed by the renewing of their minds, will count it a joy to present their bodies and their possessions a sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

NOTE A.  
HOW TO GIVE.

(1) *Give from a pure motive*: with a view to divine approval; not to be seen of men, or to please them; not to gratify or exalt self. Beware lest some lurking wolf find hiding place beneath the snowy fleece of benevolence. (2) *Give honestly*: of what is yours, not another's; what you pretend to give; without quibbling or misrepresentation; guarding against false and delusive excuses concerning debt, lack of income, and necessary expenses. You are doing business with God. It is worse than folly to dissimulate. (3) *Give with discrimination*. Miscellaneous giving is folly. Indiscriminate giving is sin. There is giving that is cursing. Give with "a cool head and a fervid heart." Know to what you are contributing, and how your contributions are to be applied. (4) *Give systematically*: not from impulse or caprice, but regularly, according to some well arranged plan. (5) *Give frequently*: as you perform other acts of worship; modestly, as a servant of God; gratefully, in acknowledgment of unspeakably greater gifts received; faithfully, from a high sense of duty; cheerfully, as enjoying a blessed privilege; lovingly, as one for whom Christ gave Himself.—C. E. Hewitt, D. D.

NOTE B.  
METHOD IN GIVING.

Do not be slovenly—be systematic. Get an account book, sharpen your pencil and keep books, especially with that portion of your income which you have decided shall be held sacred for God's use. We recommend starting with, at least, one-tenth. In after years, when God has prospered us, as He is sure to do if we have thus honored Him, you can give a fifth, a quarter, a half, or your entire income after a bare living has been provided. Watch your expenses.—W. W. Cooper.



## **Some Reasons Why a Student Association Should Promote the Study of Missions**

MR. FENNELL P. TURNER.

*(Reprinted from report of the Versailles Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation.)*

“To enlist students in the work of extending the Kingdom of Christ throughout the whole world” is one of the objects of the Student Christian Associations. If this object is to be attained, two things are necessary, namely: (1) students must give their lives for the extension of Christ's Kingdom in non-Christian lands; and (2) these workers and their work must be supported by believers in Christian lands. “How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?”

Experience has shown that listening to addresses on missions and the reading of missionary literature are not adequate. A thorough study of missions is necessary. The obligation, therefore, rests upon each association to provide a comprehensive course of mission study. The responsibility, however, does not end with this. Students must be led to enter upon the courses when they have been provided, and, in the light of such study,

to decide whether they should labor in the Christian or non-Christian lands.

The study of missions will remove narrow-mindedness and ignorance as nothing else can. He who knows nothing of missions cannot read even the daily papers intelligently.

The Christian student should be an intelligent advocate of the missionary enterprise. He should be conversant with the difficulties in the way of evangelizing the world. He should know what factors are essential for the success of missions. He should be familiar with the history of missions, not only of that branch of the Christian Church with which he is connected, but of all branches. He should be able, when necessary, to refute false charges which are so frequently brought against missionaries and their work.

One cannot pray intelligently for the progress of God's Kingdom in the world without a knowledge of missions. He must know something of the need of the mission fields, of the character of work undertaken by missionaries, of the workers, of the hindrances, and of the progress being made.

The study of missions is an aid to spiritual growth. For inspiration and encouragement what is better than the biographies of the great missionaries? They placed their trust in God and He failed them not. "In the school of prayer" they can teach Christians lessons of great value. One's faith is lifted by coming in contact with them.

No Christian student should decide his life-work until the claims of the mission field have been prayerfully considered. To do so would be to settle this momentous question with insufficient light.

Missionary candidates should prosecute the study of missions that they may be better prepared for their work. This study should be taken up as soon as possible. It is a mistake to put it off until entering upon the study of theology or medicine, and a greater mistake to wait until one reaches the mission field.

So far as human agencies are concerned, the stability of the missionary enterprise depends on having a missionary pastorate in the home churches. A strong base of supplies is indispensable. The work in the mission field will languish unless the support by the home churches is adequate. The Kingdom of Christ cannot be extended, missionary candidates cannot be sent out to the work to which they have dedicated their lives, unless pastors throw themselves with enthusiasm and conviction into the advocacy of and work for missions.

Not only should the future pastor study missions, but it is important that those who are to become lay members of the churches should be enlisted. How much easier the task of the pastor if he be intelligently supported by the influential lawyers, doctors, editors, and business men in his parish. The force of missionaries could be greatly increased if the men of wealth in the churches were giving proportionately of their great incomes for this work. Would not some of the men of

wealth in the universities be led to support one or more missionaries if they were induced to study missions while students?

The missionary enterprise and international politics are closely related. "Missionaries run the risk," Lord Salisbury has said, "of producing terrible events on a gigantic scale because their position is closely mixed up with that of secular powers." No doubt missionaries and their work are unpopular at many foreign chancelleries. It is of the greatest importance, therefore, that the future foreign ministers, ambassadors, consuls, officers of the armies and navies, and other officials of Christian nations have a sympathetic knowledge of missions. And when have our student movements a better opportunity than while those men are students?

