

Why should I give?

Christian stewardship is set in the context of God’s generosity to us, Christ’s lordship over all aspects of our life, and our complete dependence on God.

We give in gratitude because God has given so much to us; we give as part of our commitment to following Christ; and we give to be partners with God in his work in the world.

SEE ALSO : 1 Corinthians 16:1 – 2, 2 Corinthians 9:6 – 11

How much should I give?

In the Old Testament, God instructed the Jews to set aside one tenth (“tith”) of their income for him: to support the Levites, to provide for the poor, and to offer in praise and worship to God. In the New Testament, we recognize that the whole of our lives belongs to God, and we use the tithe as a starting point for Christian stewardship, not as a goal. God challenges us to give both generously and cheerfully—because our generosity to others always flows out of God’s generosity to us.

SEE ALSO : Mark 12:41 – 44, 1 Timothy 6:17 – 19

What does the church’s General Fund support?

The General Fund supports the full range of the church’s ministries, in Escalon and around the world. The General Fund also supports our local congregation—supporting children and families, challenging youth and college students with the gospel, caring for the sick and dying, providing for corporate worship, and training and equipping us for Christian discipleship.

Should I give only to the General Fund or to other ministries also?

If Escalon Presbyterian is your church home, we believe you should give your tithe first and primarily to the church’s work through the General Fund. Many people also support other ministries, both Christian and secular, in and out of the church, above and beyond their support of the General Fund.

Why should I fill out a Pledge Card?

Completing a Pledge Card can be a statement of faith—a chance to make a tangible commitment to faithful financial stewardship. It provides an opportunity to look ahead and plan your financial stewardship thoughtfully and prayerfully.

New Consecration Sunday

October 11, 2009



STEWARDSHIP 2009

October 11, 2009: New Consecration Sunday

This Sunday is set aside by our church to discuss Biblical Stewardship. Please pray about you or your family’s commitment to Escalon Presbyterian Church. We will present our commitment cards together during the worship service and share a meal together afterwards. For more information about stewardship, see the Frequently Asked Questions on the back.

DEAR FRIENDS,

On October 11 we will be celebrating together New Consecration Sunday. To consecrate is to “solemnly dedicate or set apart for a higher purpose.” This is a Sunday where we do precisely this – solemnly dedicate and set apart for a higher purpose a portion of our financial resources for the mission of our Church in the world.

The Foundation of New Consecration Sunday

The purpose of New Consecration Sunday is to provide a biblically based understanding of Christian stewardship to our congregation. In particular, this worship service deals specifically with the stewardship of our personal financial resources for the mission of God’s church in the world.

Despite the fact that the Bible has no aversion to the discussion of money and its relation to the faithfulness of God’s people, there is a good deal of discomfort with the subject of the giving of our personal financial resources. A modern American aversion towards biblical discussions of financial matters in the church comes from two different directions (as far as I can see). One, of course, is the abuse of emotional brow-beating often witnessed by television evangelists who are often convicted or accused of financial impropriety. That is to say, people donate money in good faith for a particular mission only to in turn, fund the lavish lifestyle of selfish opportunists. The other, less noticed but no less obvious reason, is American individualism. That is to say, the money I earn is my money and no one – not even God – will tell me what it should or should not be used for.

Our desire to follow biblical stewardship principles requires us to avoid and discourage both attitudes. On the first attitude we desire financial accountability and transparency and we want any discussion of financial matters to not be “browbeating.” God desires an attitude of the “cheerful” giver to his work. However, though cheerful giving is not encouraged by shaming, it is neither cultivated by passivity. Therefore, on the second attitude, we believe that nothing is ultimately “ours” and God does, in fact, have quite a bit of teaching for us to pay attention to on this subject. All that we have is pure gift from God, which we are entrusted to “steward” for his good purpose. The giving of a portion of our financial resources to the work of the church is deeply biblical and essential to the mission of the church. Therefore, we intend to speak clearly and to challenge God’s people in their giving as it faithfully relates to what God says to us in his word.

The irony for me as a pastor is that though I have discomfort talking about Christian stewardship with other Christians (usually for obvious concern that my motives will be questioned – as I receive my salary through giving), I have no discomfort talking about my own giving. There has been great joy for my wife and I in tithing regularly to the work of this church, and above that, the work of other Christian missions that we believe in. God calls us to give to his work in the world and it is no great sacrifice or generous feat on our behalf to do what he calls us to do. It’s just how we understand obedience to God in response to what he’s already done for us.

The Details of New Consecration Sunday

Our church discusses Christian stewardship specifically once a year. For three weeks leading up to October 11, we will have short introductions to prepare our church family for this event. This preparation is intended to allow individuals and families to pray over what God is calling them to give to the church over the course of the next year. During this worship service we will listen to a biblically based sermon on Christian Stewardship, followed with an opportunity to present a commitment to the church for the next year in the form of a commitment card during a closing offering. Why do we encourage the offering of a commitment card?

First, your private commitment is a public act of obedience to God and support of this church. It is a response to biblical challenge of God’s people to give a consistent portion of their financial resources to God’s work in the world. You and your family decide what that form of commitment will be. You will not be evaluated or questioned on it. Yet a personal commitment is important.

Second, your commitment cards are viewed by one person, our financial officer who already sees and accounts for your regular giving. You can also change your commitment at any time, for any reason, based upon the changing circumstances of your own life and work. This is not a contract, this is a faith-based commitment.

Third, your commitments are essential for us to present a responsible and accountable budget. Without it, Session must pass a budget that is merely a random guess rather than a reasonable expectation. We cannot designate needed financial resources to any of our growing ministries, we cannot continue to update our facilities, and we cannot support our staffing needs without a budget that reflects a reasonably accurate expectation of congregational giving. To merely hope that we can meet our ministry goals is not a responsible and transparent way to operate.

Following our worship service we will have a meal together to celebrate our continued, collective support of the mission of this church in our communities and to hear the fruit of this event. We want you to prepare as an individual or as a family for this worship service with prayer, with discernment, and engagement with the Bible.

We are fully aware of uncertain financial times – and intend to be supportive of all our church family enduring struggling times. Yet, in a time when churches are cutting budgets in large numbers and laying off staff, often the result of risky budgeting and inflated income projections – our church has stayed the course remarkably well over the last year. This is because of the faithful and committed giving of our congregation *alongside* of a responsible budget that was formulated as a result of last year’s New Consecration Sunday. We invite you to join us again this year for New Consecration Sunday, October 11, where we commit ourselves not only to our church’s present mission, but to its continued future as well.

In Christ, Troy J. Onsager