

# Stewardship

This is what happened. From earliest childhood I admired and wanted nice things. At first, pretty toys and games; later, fancy clothes and a car; then, the latest and best of household furnishings and gadgets. To get what I wanted was a very big thing in my life.

I didn't plan to be an embezzler. I didn't plan to steal. I didn't realize just what I was doing. In fact I thought I was a good Christian. Then it happened. Through our home devotions, our pastor's sermons, and our church's Every Member Visit, my eyes were really opened. I discovered that my life was badly out of line with the pattern of thankful living as a redeemed child of God. I was selfish. I was thinking too much of myself and my own pleasure.

I discovered I was buying many things without giving thought to whether it would serve me to God's glory. I was overly interested in me!

Next I discovered I had been taking money hand over fist ... not from my neighbor or friend; but, worst of all, from my God. To my amazement I actually discovered that I was not an owner at all. I was merely a manager of what God entrusted to me for a short period of time. I owned nothing. God permitted me to withdraw living expenses, but the rest I was to invest for God - this is what I learned. And anything else I spent on myself was drawn against "company" (God's) funds. No one had to tell me. I saw it for myself. I stood condemned. I had been an embezzler! ... and I didn't realize it.

My budget had revolved around the purchase and use of things - good things,

nice things, profitable things - but things, nonetheless. I would work longer hours to get one added comfort after the other, but whether my income was \$20,000 or



\$40,000, the Lord could expect my usual \$500 each year - and without thinking this through I thought this was generous. All the while, millions in the world were not hearing the message of salvation through the Savior.

There's no use kidding - I was an embezzler. But God in his grace and mercy opened my eyes. God awakened me out of my selfish stupor. Through God's Word and through my fellow Christians, God challenged me to share a first portion and a generous percentage of the financial blessings bestowed to me in the cause of his Kingdom. In love, God has chosen me to be a partner in the work of the church. No longer an embezzler, now a partner! I pray for continued grace and power that my present percentage for the

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*All of us are caretakers. Nothing belongs to us; everything belongs to God. Not all men and women realize this, but Christians do and strive to please God in the use of all that God has put in their care. Yes, you are a caretaker ... God's caretaker!*



## Showers of Blessings

**I**pulled into the parking lot and began to search for the closest parking place. I was surprised when one was available close to the front door of the grocery store. “Well, at least something is going right for a change,” I thought, as I released my seat belt.

My heart was as overcast as the day. A friend had treated me unfairly earlier that morning. I was also depressed over some family health issues. Sheets of rain were pounding down. I didn’t have an umbrella with me. Since it didn’t look like the storm would cease any time soon, I would make a run for it. I was very close to the store, so I didn’t think I would get very wet.

I glanced about two lanes over just before I opened my door. I spotted an elderly lady walking slowly through the rain. She was pushing a buggy with one hand, while trying to maneuver a worn-out umbrella with the other. The spokes of the umbrella were turned upward, accumulating water by the bucketfuls.

My heart went out to her. Without thinking, I ran through the rain toward her. “Get in your car,” I shouted. “Give me your buggy. If you will unlock the passenger door, I will put your groceries inside for you. You don’t need to get wet. You might get sick,” I shouted.

She did exactly as I asked and then got into her car. I am certain I looked like a drenched rat standing there in the rain holding onto her buggy filled with groceries. Once she got the door opened, I placed the bags of groceries on the passenger seat.

“Have a great day!” I exclaimed to her, just before I shut the door. She

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**H**ave you remembered the church in your Will?” Old Sam Elder asked of Ned Neighbors.

“I don’t have a Will,” replied Ned. “We have just one heir, our daughter Mary. She will get what’s left after paying our bills.”

“You have an easy situation,” said old Sam. “It’s not that simple!” Ned stated. “I can’t stand Mary getting our money after we are gone and I’m darned if I’m going to hand it to her in a Will. That girl makes me so mad! “How come, Ned ?” asked old Sam.

“Mary is a spendthrift! She spends money she doesn’t have or expect to have ... owes everybody. She sure didn’t get that from Betsy or me. Man, she would go through our modest estate like a knife through hot butter!” Ned complained. “She justifies her spending by saying that she was so deprived as a child.”

“Was she deprived?” Sam inquired.

“Never! But I know her problem. She loved horseback riding, but we couldn’t afford to give her a horse of her own,” Ned continued. “I’m tempted to leave her nothing, but Betsy says I can’t do that; I must be forgiving.”

“Betsy is right, of course,” Sam counseled. “Please see a lawyer. There are several options to give to Mary, the church, or others, the portions you desire.”

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*It is not a question of how reasonable it is to tithe. It is not a question of convenience. It is not a question of what God will do for us.*

*It is a question of faith in God as creator and owner of all things, and complete trust in God’s providential promises. Every Christian can benefit by tithing because it makes more vital that faith, which surely has been tested before.*

# Stewardship Prayer

*O lord, giver of life and the source of our freedom, we are reminded by the psalmist that yours is “the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it.”*

*We know that it is in your hand that we have received all we have, and are, and will be.*

*Gracious and loving God, we understand that you call us to be the stewards of your abundance, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us.*

*Help us always to use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously.*

*May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of Christ in our lives.*

*We pray with grateful hearts, in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

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## Steward of the Month

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### What a Couple!

**Submitted by: Kathy, Falls City, NE**

**M**y story is about a great couple: Max and Norma Roland. They are always willing to help; holding offices, working the benefits, and sharing their time, talents and resources with many. Their Orphan Grain Train activities are many. They have time and again taken articles of clothing to the Orphan Grain Train sites in Lincoln and Norfolk, NE, and often work at the sites also.

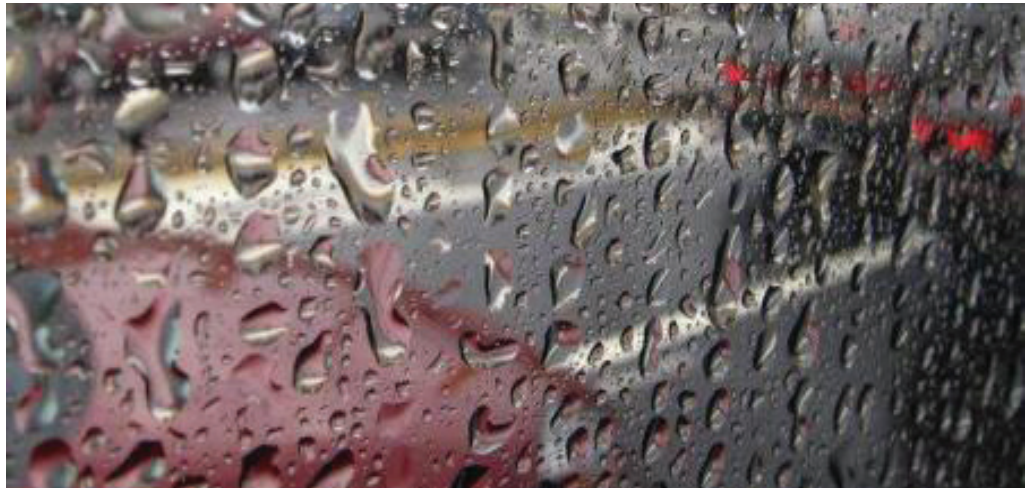
Max is the treasurer of our church and Norma is on the Stewardship Committee. Together they help raise awareness of stewardship in our congregation. Norma makes sure that there is a basket each quarter for missions. They are very active in our church and really tell people about missions and how to help.

Max and Norma stay incredibly busy ... just as most retired folks do! They are also quite active in LifeLight Bible Study, Men’s Bible Study, Adult Bible Study.

Max and Norma have both held several positions within these groups. They are never too busy to say “sure.” We truly appreciate all the work these two do and I believe they deserve to sit down awhile and take a deep breath! 

*Think of time as a priceless gift; develop an awareness of its incomparable value and examine your conscience in this light. Are you using your time according to God’s plan, or are you throwing it away?*

*If tomorrow were never to dawn, what would you do for God today?*




*“The act of serving brought a ray of light to my once downcast and dreary day.”*

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### **This is what happened...**

Lord may continue to grow and grow, until some day I may be giving a truly sacrificial portion of my income for God, who is my joy and my life.

This is my story. 

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### **Showers of Blessings...**

stared at me with amazement in her eyes.


“Hold on for a minute. I have never had anyone to do anything like this for me before. May God bless you abundantly,” she uttered. I smiled and slowly walked off. Since I was already soaking wet, I didn’t see much need to run to the store.

I went up to the service desk after entering the front door. Rainwater was dripping off my nose and my once-styled hair was limp in my face. The manager handed me a couple of paper towels.

“It is a horrible day, isn’t it?” he proclaimed.

“Well actually, it has turned out to be a pretty good one,” I announced. He looked at me rather strangely. I knew that he had no idea why I made that re-

mark. He didn’t respond to my positive comment, but simply went back to his work.

When I made my purchase and returned to my car, I thought about how much better I felt after helping the lady with her groceries. The act of serving brought a ray of light to my once downcast and dreary day. I made a promise to myself, as I drove the almost seventy miles home through the heavy rainfall that day. I decided that from that day forward, when I face storms in my life, I would look for someone else that had a need, which I could fill. I have found that it is through serving others that I have received tremendous blessings. That day, I received a much greater blessing than the elderly lady. I was given the opportunity to be of service to someone else. 

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

“You have convinced me,” Ned told Sam. “Before I could make a Will, you had to give me the Will Power.” 