


1  **New Consecration**

Psalm 51

2  **We're talking about stewardship this month and our theme is "Something Beautiful for God." Yet we need to start with consecration. Consecration – that's a different word. It's a church word. What does consecration mean anyway?**

– "to dedicate to a sacred purpose"

- Did you know that your life has a sacred purpose?
  - You might think, "Who, me? I'm just a normal person, a regular guy." Does my life really have a sacred purpose?
  - Yes, you have a sacred purpose?
    - You have a sacred purpose because you were created by God, and he created you by design, with purpose. That means your life has a sacred purpose.
  - Many of us don't live like that. In fact many of us just waste away our lives, unthinking and unconcerned about God's purpose for our lives.
  - Lee Strobel, a former Chicago Tribune reporter who became a Christian, says before he knew the Lord, he traveled through life unconcerned about God.
    - He was cruising through life. It was like he and his wife were in a convertible with the top down, casually waving at others.
    - He really didn't think much about God. Then he hit some tough times and realized his need for God.
  - Here's what the Bible teaches: Our life is a gift from God that we are accountable to God for. Yet before he wants any THING from us, scripture tells us he wants us - our hearts.

3  **Just as we read in Psalm 51, the main thing God**

**wants is our heart.**

- 4  **You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. Psalm 51:16,17 NLT**
- 5  **So underscore this: True stewardship begins with an awareness that our life and all that have is a gift from God.**
- 6  **When we've settled that, other things begin to fall into place.**
  - For one, our giving falls into place.
- 7  **Do you know why some congregations give more per capita than others?**
  - Research has actually answered that question.
  - We see different giving patterns in 3 different types of congregations.
- 8  **One type of church just takes offerings.**
  - They have no annual stewardship campaign.
  - Folks in those churches give an average of 1.5 % of their income to the church.
- 9  **The second type of church is a pledging church.**
  - Folks write on a pledge card the dollars per week or per month they plan to give.
  - Folks in pledging congregations give an average of 2.9 % of their income.
  - In other words, folks who write down their financial commitment give twice as much as those who do not write down their intentions on paper.
- 10  **The third type of church is a percentage giving church.**

- These churches don't ask folks to give to meet the budget needs of the church.
- Let me say that again – you heard me right. These churches don't ask folks to give to the budget needs of the church.
- Rather they consistently ask this question: "What percentage of your income do you feel God is calling you to give?"
  - Now I think they focus on percentage giving because this increases our awareness of how much we are actually giving to God.
  - For example, the poor widow who gave 2 mites gave 100% - all that she had, while the rich giving out of their abundance gave a much smaller percentage.
- In percentage giving churches, persons then translate that percentage into a dollar amount, write it on a card, and turn it in.
- Folks in these churches give 4.6 percent of their income, or three times as much as those who only give offerings.

11  **Now why do they give more? I think it relates to the heart.**

- The third type of church focuses on giving to God.
- Other types of churches focus on giving to raise funds for a budget.
- So what's the difference?

12  **"Giving to God" understands that the giving God desires is – as Grace Orton put it – "a heart project".**

- It begins with consecration of your life – dedication to a sacred purpose.
- Realizing that each day of life – all that we are and have – is a gift from God.
- Out of this awareness comes the desire to give back to

God.

- 13  **So why give from God's point of view?**
- Because WE need to give. Giving is good for US.
  - In those third type churches – the churches who ask, “What percentage of your income do you feel God is calling you to give? – the purpose first of all is to grow spiritually in my relationship with God.
  - Once again, let me underscore: Godly giving is not first of all about “paying the bills” or “supporting the budget”, it’s about giving to God out of a consecrated life. We might call this spiritually focused stewardship.
- 14  **So why does spiritually focused stewardship work better than fund-raising methods? To quote Herb Miller,**
- “Fund-raising for non-profit organizations is as different from Christian stewardship as a bicycle is from an eight-teen wheeler. Both are valid forms of transportation but they are not interchangeable. They accomplish two different purposes.
  - The goal of secular fund-raising: dollars for a worthy cause.
  - The goal of Christian stewardship: faithful management of all that God gives so that God can use our gifts to transform us spiritually and to extend Christ's transforming love to others.
- 15  **You see, Jesus taught that there is a spiritual connection between money and God. Jesus said,**
- 16  **Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:34**
- 17  **What controls us – God or money. Jesus said you can't worship both.**
- 18  **One comedian joked that if an alien came from outer space and observed people walking their**

**dogs, the alien would conclude that the dogs ran the planet.**

- The dogs walk in front of the people, and the people follow them.
- When the dog stops, the person stops and waits.
- When the dog uses the bathroom on the sidewalk, the dutiful servant pulls out a plastic bag and scoops up the mess and puts it in his or her pocket.
- Who is really the master here?

19  **So Jesus asks, who will be the master of your life, God or money?**

20  **True Christian stewardship is treasure management that helps us escape the trap of selfishness by keeping ourselves spiritually focused on God.**


21  **What was Jesus teaching? Each of us makes one of two choices in life. We either become emotionally attached to money, or we become emotionally attached to the God who gives us our money.**

- Although we often hope to do both, in our hearts we know that cannot happen.
- Financial stewardship helps us overcome the temptation to break the First Commandment and put the false idol of money first, ahead of the God who revealed his love for us through Jesus Christ.

22  **It's like the two little girls counting their pennies, one said, "I have five. How many do you have?"**

- "Ten," the other answered.
- "You don't! You just have five, the same as me," the first protested, pointing at the other girl's palm.
- "No, I have five here, and my dad said he would give me five more when he gets home tonight," her friend

said. "So that makes ten."

23  **That little girl's answer summarizes what Jesus said about financial security. It's about trusting our Heavenly Father.**

- The poor woman Jesus observed giving the largest possible offering (all she had) at the temple did not expect to starve to death.
  - She did not see herself as doing something rash. She gave generously because she knew there was more where that came from—God (Mark 12:41-44).
  - Giving is not so much an act of generosity as it is an act of trust.
  - We do not feel financially secure because we have; we feel secure because we trust God to continue providing what we need.
  - Giving first to God is the way we express that trust.

24  **So where will you place our weight today – upon God or upon money?**

- Where do we put our trust? Is it "in God we trust" or in the money that bears these words.
- God calls us first to new consecration – dedication of our lives to his sacred purpose and trust in him.
- How is God calling you to trust him, to dedicate your life to him today?