

Stewardship Is...
Stewardship Sunday – February 16, 2014

Life!

On the first day, God created the dog and said, “Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. For this I will give you a life span of twenty years.” The dog said, “That’s a long time to be barking. How about only ten years and I’ll give you back the other ten?” And God said that it was good.

On the second day, God created the monkey and said, “Entertain people, do tricks and make them laugh. For this, I’ll give you a twenty-year life span.” The monkey said, “Monkey tricks for twenty years? That’s a pretty long time to perform. How about I give you back ten like the dog did?” And God again said that it was good.

On the third day, God created the cow and said, “You must go into the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer’s family. For this, I will give you a life span of sixty years.” The cow said, “That’s kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. How about twenty and I’ll give back the other forty?” And God agreed it was good.

On the fourth day, God created humans and said, “Eat, sleep, play, marry and enjoy your life. For this, I’ll give you twenty years.” But the human said, “Only twenty years? Could you possible give me my twenty, the forty the cow gave back, the ten the monkey gave back, and the ten the dog gave back; that makes eighty, okay?” “Okay,” said God. “You asked for it.”

So that is why for our first twenty years we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves. For the next forty years we slave in the sun to support our family. For the next ten years, we do monkey tricks to entertain the grandchildren. And for the last ten years, we sit on the front porch and bark at everyone.

Life has now been explained to you.

This is Stewardship Sunday. “Oh boy, the preacher is going to talk about money again. Hold on to your wallet!” That’s true, but only partially true. I want to talk

about life today. Stewardship is about a lot more than just money. It's really about the whole of your life, the totality of your life.

Turn in your Bible to the Old Testament psalms – Psalm 90. This is perhaps the oldest of the Psalms. It was penned by Moses, most likely at the end of his life, having arrived on the east bank of the Jordan River opposite Jericho. Here he would go up onto the mountain and die.

Before he does, he gathers the people and gives them a final charge. Psalm 90 opens with these words: “Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Moses echoes with what he charges the people – From Deuteronomy, chapter 33:

The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.
– *Deuteronomy 33:27*

There are many other similarities throughout. Our lives, Moses says, are like grass – grass that flourishes in the morning, but in the evening they fade and wither away. Now pick up at verse 10:

Psalm 90:10-12

Some other translations render the end of verse 12 this way:

- That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (KJV)
- That we may gain a heart of wisdom (NIV)
- That we may grow in wisdom (NLT)
- That we may present to You a heart of wisdom (NASB)

Live a life of wisdom. Your life matters. It matters to God; it matters to you; it matters to others. God, who gave you life, wants you to use that life, invest that life, take care of that life, because it comes from God and it is to him you will give an account.

There are two premises that form the foundation for what I am going to share this morning:

1) All that you are and all that you have is a gift from God. David declares in Psalm 24:

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. – *Psalm 24:1*

In Psalm 100, the psalmist declares that we are God's creation and God's possession. He writes:

Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. – *Psalm 100:3*

It's amazing how some things really stick with you that you observed growing up, even though at the time it might have become somewhat routine and rote. In the little rural Lutheran church I grew up in, after taking the offering the ushers would bring the offering plates up the center aisle and place them on the altar.

As they came forward the congregation sang these words:

We give Thee but Thine own;
What e're the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone;
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

I can still sing those words today, but they are far more meaningful now that I understand the difference between ownership and stewardship.

2) God has given you all things to enjoy and to manage as a good and wise steward. The Apostle Paul speaks to this in his letter to Timothy. Turn over in your Bible to the New Testament book of First Timothy, chapter 4.

I Timothy 4:4-5; 6:17

As we consider the subject of stewardship this morning, I want to broaden our perspective in relation to Knollwood and the Knollwood family. There are three areas I want you to focus upon:

- 1) Giving – money
- 2) Serving – ministry
- 3) Growing – maturity

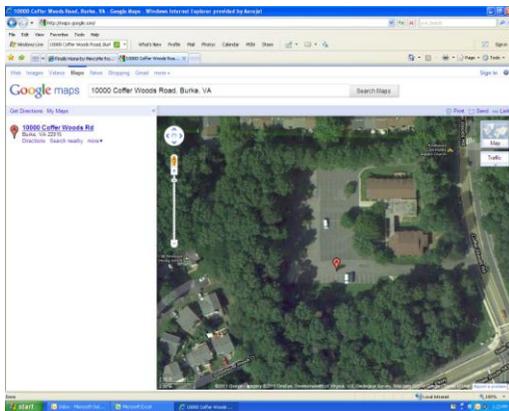
Let's approach these three areas with three words: Celebrate; Consider; and Commit.

I. First, we at Knollwood have much reason to **Celebrate**.

A. **Giving** – In 12 days, we bring to a close Stewardship Journey III. For those of you visiting or perhaps you are a more recent attendee at Knollwood, this is our third three-year capital campaign for Phase 1 in our building program.

SJ III – Pledged: \$563,360 Received: \$603,975 (through February 9)

In 2003, we began a process to determine what our space needs were by virtue of our vision for ministry. We also had engineers and architects determining what we could build on these five acres.



We received approval of our Master Plan, comprised of three major phases, from Fairfax County in May, 2006. But even before we had been approved, we launched our first Stewardship Journey. The theme was “With a Willing Heart.” This echoes the exhortation of Moses to the people about giving of their resources to build the tabernacle that God had given instructions for building.

This is the thing that the LORD has commanded. Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD’s contribution.... And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD’s contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments.

So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the LORD.... – *Exodus 35: 4-5, 21-22*

And so you came with a willing heart, and you gave:

SJ I..... \$789,043
SJ II.... \$666,964
SJ III... \$603,975 (through February 9)

Total nine-year giving: **\$2,059,982** since March 1, 2005

This is in addition to your regular giving for the operating budget which includes facilities, personnel, ministries and missions!

2,059, 982 reasons to CELEBRATE! But not just your money....

B. Serving – Never before have we had so many people involved in various ministries, serving others, than now. Just look around on Sunday mornings: worship team, children’s ministry volunteers, student ministry volunteers, ushers, greeters, tellers, ABF teachers, our tech team, hospitality, facilities, prayer, and so on. That’s just on Sundays.

Others serve in various ways throughout the week in ministries such as women’s and men’s ministries, missions, benevolence, finance, Knollwood preschool, service ministry, home groups and so on.

I am so proud of you and gratified by the tremendous number of those who are actively engaged in serving here at Knollwood. That is reason to celebrate!

C. Growing – and I know that people are growing spiritually. We get feedback from so many of you how God is working in your lives. Thank you for sharing with us so we can celebrate what God is doing. People are coming to faith in Christ; people are seeing their spiritual walk deepening and broadening as they spend time in God’s word. How exciting!

Celebrate. Then, Consider.

II. Consider how you might continue or perhaps, for some of you, begin to be involved in these three areas.

A. Giving – The giving to SJ I, II, and III got this site prepared and this building built. There are many people who at the beginning gave to the building program, knowing that they would most likely not be here to enjoy it. Retirements, job

relocations, etc. would take them from this area, but they believed in the work of God at Knollwood and, by faith with a willing heart, gave of their resources so that we who are here today could enjoy this facility – Phase 1A.



We now have to pay for the building. We have a mortgage of \$3.2M. This is in addition to our operating budget. Our combined budget this year is almost \$900,000. As you might have seen in the latest Knollwood News, we are a little under \$8,000 behind in our giving to budget. Actually that is very good because we have had significantly increased budgets these past two years, especially now with the mortgage.

Why give? Consider these five reasons:

- 1) To demonstrate your orientation to God's ownership;
- 2) To demonstrate your stewardship of God's supply;
- 3) To demonstrate your gratitude for God's goodness;
- 4) To demonstrate your faith in God's faithfulness;
- 5) To demonstrate your love for others according to God's command.

B. Serving – Consider where and how you might serve here at Knollwood. There are so many places for you to consider. What do you enjoy doing? Working with children or youth or adults? Doing administrative tasks? Working with your hands, doing maintenance work? Teaching? Maybe you don't know for sure, but are willing to find out where God blesses your work. Let us know. Talk with Pastor Alan.

Let us find a place of service for you that fits your gifts, talents and interests. Sometimes it's just that there are things that need to be done.

Look what Paul says about his ministry; it applies to us as well:

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 trustworthy. – *I Corinthians 4:1-2*

The Apostle Peter talks about “serving” in his first letter, chapter four:

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. – *I Peter 4:10-11*

C. Growing – God asks you to be a good steward of the grace within you – of your spiritual life. Physical health and vitality requires nutrients – food! And so it is with your spiritual health and vitality. The Apostle Paul urges us “to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ.”

The Apostle Peter concludes his second letter with these words:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. – *II Peter 3:18*

Consider what you are doing to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Consider the need to invest time and effort in your spiritual growth. We pay such close attention to those matters of this life – our jobs, our income, our financial portfolio for retirement. But what about those matters that pertain to the next life; things of importance in your spiritual life, not just your material life?

Stewardship: Celebrate; Consider; and then finally, Commit.

III. Commit – Are there some decisions you need to make, some actions you need to take to be a more wise and better steward of your life?

A. Giving – What about your giving? Do you give regularly, generously, even sacrificially to the Lord’s work? Do you manage well the material resources that God has entrusted to you?

Randy Alcorn speaks of the “affluenza virus.” In *The Treasure Principle*, he writes:

Only giving breaks affluenza’s fever. Only giving defies the spirit of entitlement. Only giving breaks me free from the gravitational hold of money and possessions. Giving shifts me to a new center of gravity – heaven.

God blesses us that we might not only care for ourselves and our families, but that we might be a channel of blessing to others. That happens through our giving. We need to be reminded of the limitations of money, or wealth. Someone has written wisely:

Money will buy a bed but not sleep;
 books but not brains;
 food but not appetite;
 finery but not beauty;
 a house but not a home;
 medicine but not health;
 luxuries but not culture;
 amusements but not happiness;
 religion but not salvation;
 a passport to everywhere but heaven.

– *The Voice in the Wilderness*

Remember the balance: God has given you all things to enjoy, but asks that you be a wise and good steward of those resources. Giving demonstrates stewardship while acknowledging that God is the owner. He wants to use you to help meet the needs of others.

B. Serving – Commit to serving others. Paul writes to the Galatians and says:

... through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word:
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” – *Galatians 5:13-14*

Commit to finding a place to serve. Not only will you benefit others; it will benefit you. Not only will others be blessed; you will be blessed.

C. Growing – Commit to growing up in Christ. The growth comes from God, but there are things we can do to put ourselves in a place to grow. Get involved in

personal Bible reading and study. Develop a habit of speaking to God through prayer. Get involved in some sort of group setting – it is very helpful and healthy to grow in the community of a small group experience – ABF, women’s and men’s Bible studies, etc.

It won’t happen without conscious effort and action on your part. But if you do, watch out! God will meet you there. And you will see spiritual growth over time as you learn more, reflect more, obey more.

There is one more thing I want you to think about this morning as far as being a wise steward. I believe that God wants you to be a wise and good steward over the whole of your life, and that includes some important end-of-life issues.

Have you thought about the guardianship of your minor children should something happen to you. If you don’t make plans, others or the state will decide. Do you have a will that directs the distribution of your assets after your death? Have you considered powers of attorney should you become incapacitated? How about medical directives? There has been so much in the news lately regarding final wishes. Part of our stewardship is thinking about these issues and making decisions now when we are able to do so.

Perhaps you have never thought of these issues. To this end, we want to help provide information for you to be wise about such things. On Saturday, March 8, we are going to hold a seminar here at Knollwood on estate planning. It will be conducted by an estate attorney who put together a living trust for Nancy and me several years ago. He is a committed Christian who is serious about the issue of stewardship.

There is no charge and there is absolutely no obligation. We just want to provide you with information that will help you be a good and wise steward of your family and your resources. There is a brochure available in the foyer as you leave if you want to consider attending this seminar. Childcare will be provided for those who need it. Just let us know.

Stewardship: It’s about everything!