

Hooray!
It's a
stewardship
sermon!

(Said no one ever.)





The stewardship sermon
“Alright, let’s get this over with”



Fun
stewardship

This positive stewardship message is entirely scriptural. But it's different. It starts positive. It ends positive.

**NO
THANKS**

God doesn't
want giving.



God doesn't
want giving.

- Nope.
- God wants only a specific kind of giving. He wants giving only with the right emotion.

If it's not fun
you're doing it
wrong!



Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor 9:7 NIV).

remembering the words that the Lord Jesus himself said, 'There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.'" (Acts 20:35b GNT).

"In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity." (2 Cor 8:2 NIV).

"Instruct them to ... put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" (1 Tim 6:17).

If it's not fun
you're doing it
wrong!



God wants a cheerful, “hilariously” joyful [*hilaron*] giver. (2 Cor 9:7).

He wants giving that is even happier [*makarion*] than receiving a gift. (Acts 20:35).

He wants giving that overflows from abundant joy. (2 Cor 8:2).

He wants giving that is “party-time” enjoyable [*apolausin*]. (1 Tim 6:17).

If it's not fun
you're doing it
wrong!

If the gift doesn't have
positive emotion, He
doesn't want it.

If it's not accompanied by
joy, happiness, and love,
He doesn't want it.

It doesn't matter how
much it is. Without that
positive emotion, it's all
pointless. (1 Cor 13:3
ESV)



“You know, that stuff you own? Enjoy it!”

“not ... to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” 1 Tim 6:17b-18

It’s part of an ongoing gift intended for enjoyment. So, enjoy it!

It’s yours, but it’s disappearing. So, enjoy it!





Enjoy it!

What prevents enjoyment?

- Binging with excess consumption is not an enjoyable life.
- Burying it and dying with it is not an enjoyable life.

Enjoy it!

What leads to enjoyment?

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy:

- to do good,
- to be rich in good works,
- to be generous and ready to share,
- storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future,
- so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” 1 Tim 6:17b-18



Enjoy it! Diving into each word:

What leads to enjoyment? [*apolausin*]

- Putting it to work to do lasting good in the world. [*agathoergein*]
- Putting it to work to bring great beauty into the world. [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]
- Embracing your identity as a joyful sharer, connecting to the fellowship-community family. [*eumetadotous einai koinōnikous*]
- Making God happy by showing all the good you did with what He gave you. [*theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs*]
- That's grabbing hold of real life! [*hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs*]



A gift is more fun!

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy:”

God’s not reaching into your wallet to take your stuff. He’s reaching in to put it there in the first place. And this isn’t just about money. It’s about all things. It’s all a gift.

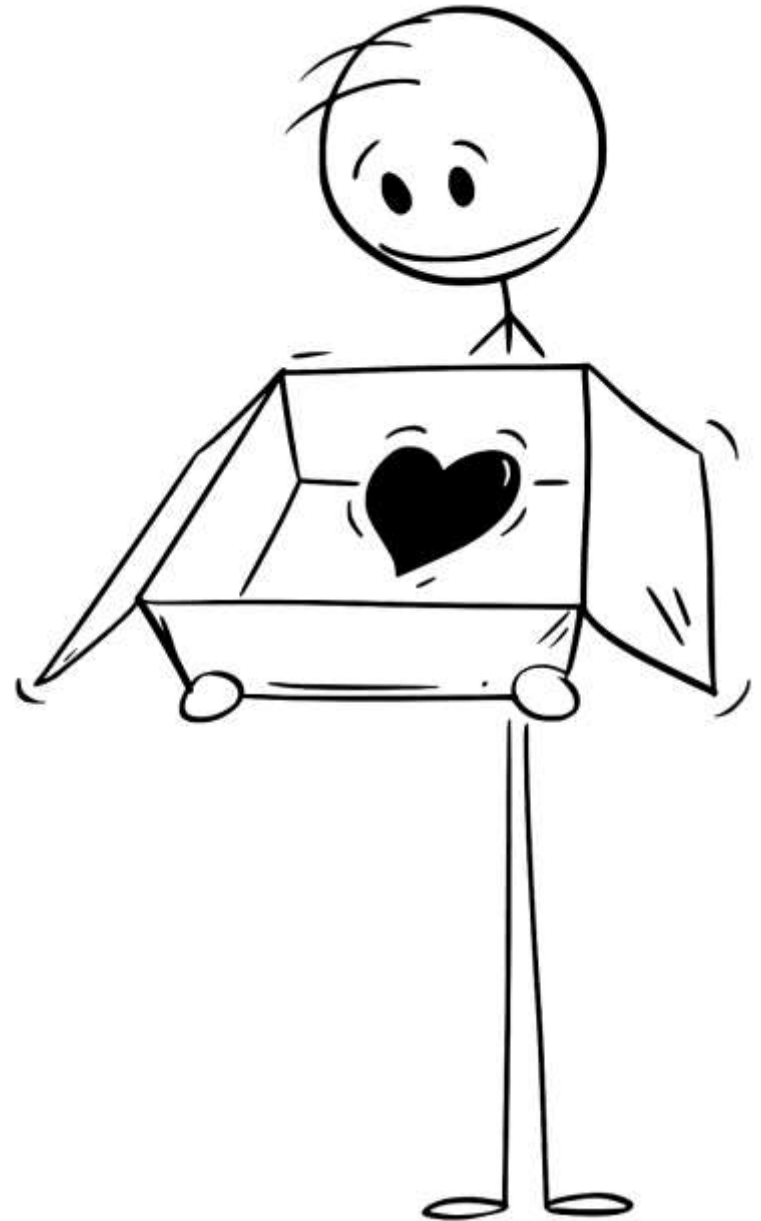
It’s a gift made with love. That makes it more enjoyable.

It’s a gift made with a purpose. That purpose is enjoyment. Enjoying it is fulfilling the desires of the one who gave it. That makes it easier to enjoy.



In 1714, Matthew Henry commented,

“To be religious, is to enjoy God in all our creature-comforts; and is not that pleasant? It is to take the common supports and conveniences of life ... as the products of his providential care concerning us, ... The sweetness of these is more than doubled, it is highly raised, when by our religion we are taught and enabled to see them all coming to us from the goodness of God, as our great benefactor, and thus to enjoy them richly, 1 Tim. VI. 17, while those who look no further than the creature, enjoy them very poorly, and but as the inferior creatures do.”



Stewardship ≠ Guilt, obligation, burden

In 1832, Charles Simeon wrote,

“There is then ... no disappointment in the use; no grief in the loss; no dread of the responsibility attached to it. On the contrary, ‘God has given to his people all things richly to enjoy:’ and they have a rich enjoyment of every thing, because they enjoy God in it. They receive it all as his gift: they taste his love in it.”



Don't bury or binge: Enjoy!

“Their enjoyment is not the clutching enjoyment of the glutton or a miser; it's the enjoyment of a child sitting in front of something his father made for him especially. It's freely felt, free in the knowledge that because of the Father we have, there's more where this came from.” – T. Dillehay



It's a gift. We're supposed to enjoy it.

Deut 26:11 gives a “thou shalt” in the King James Version.

In modern language this reads,

“you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.”

Enjoyment is mandatory. It's commanded.





The wealth origin story

God provides all things. He gives wealth. He gives the ability to produce wealth. What's the origin story of our wealth? It's God's gift. And how should that make us feel? It should make us rejoice. As Deut 12:7 commands,

“There you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.”

“But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18a NIV)



A gift is
more fun
to share!

- It was a gift to me, so I'm happy to share it with you.
- It was a gift to me, and I'll be getting plenty more where that came from, so I'm happy to share it with you.
- It was a gift to me, and this will make the one who gave it to me happy, so I'm happy to share it with you.



Enjoyment vs. hoarding or asceticism

- Both the ascetic and the miser refuse to enjoy wealth. Both view this as a virtue. The ascetic looks down on the one who enjoys wealth. So does the miser. Paul's instruction that God richly provides us all things for enjoyment opposes them both.
- When writing about wealth, Paul writes about enjoyment (I Tim 6:17), contentment (Phil 4:11), and extreme contentment (II Cor 9:8).



Enjoyment vs. hoarding or asceticism

“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on **asceticism** ... If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an **appearance** of wisdom in promoting **self-made** religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of **no value** in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” (Col 2:18a, 20-23 ESV)

Enjoyment vs. hoarding or asceticism

The ascetic “holy man” who rejects all material things has “the appearance of wisdom.” It’s attractive. It feels spiritual. But this is a “self-made religion.” Paul warns against this false religion.



Enjoyment vs. hoarding or asceticism

Those who reject God's rich provision – those who forbid its enjoyment – are not just missing good experiences. Paul says they,

“fall away from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim 4:1b)



Who is God?

In 1 Tim 6:17, Paul continues his attack on asceticism. He makes an extreme anti-ascetic statement. He does it by defining who God is. He describes,

“God [*Theō*] the one [*tō*] providing [*parechonti*] us [*hemin*] all things [*panta*] richly [*plousiōs*] for the purpose of [*eis*] enjoyment [*apolausin*]”



Who is God?

Paul doesn't just write,
“Things aren't evil. It's OK
for us to enjoy them.”

Instead, Paul defines who
God is. His definition
shows that the ascetics are
worshipping a different
God.

“God [*Theō*] the one [*tō*]
providing [*parechonti*] us
[*hemin*] all things [*panta*]
richly [*plousiōs*] for the
purpose of [*eis*] enjoyment
[*apolausin*]”



Enjoyment vs. hoarding or asceticism

The ascetic focuses on the rejection of material things. The miser focuses on the hoarding of material things. Both reject the use and enjoyment of material things.



Ascetic giving is not scriptural

Biblical giving is

- “Party-time” enjoyable. 1 Timothy 6:17 [*apolausin*]
- “Hilariously” joyful. 2 Corinthians 9:7 [*hilaron*]
- Super/hyper contented. 2 Corinthians 9:8 [*en panti pantote pasan autarkeian*]
- Overflowing from the abundance of joy. 2 Corinthians 8:2
- Happy/blessed. Acts 20:35





Was the widow's
mite a good gift?

What does Jesus say?



Was the widow's
mite a good gift?

What does Jesus say?

He says simply, "She
put in more."



Was the widow's mite a good gift?

He doesn't say, "She did it the right way."

He doesn't say, "Go and do likewise."

He says simply, and truthfully, "She put in more."



Was the widow's mite a good gift?

"She put in more."

Does that make it a good gift? Paul explains,

"And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good." (1 Cor. 13:3).

Was the widow's
mite a good gift?

Did Jesus tell others to copy
the widow?

Quite the opposite. He
ends the story by explaining
why giving to the temple –
both for the rich and the
poor widow – was pointless.

The temple they were
donating to was about to be
destroyed. Jesus explains,
“not one stone will be left
on another.”



Was the widow's
mite a good gift?

The answer is:
“We don't know”
“That's not the
point”



We don't know

Jesus says she “put in all she owned.”

Scripture explicitly tells us that giving away all your possessions does no good without the right emotion.

What was the widow's emotion?

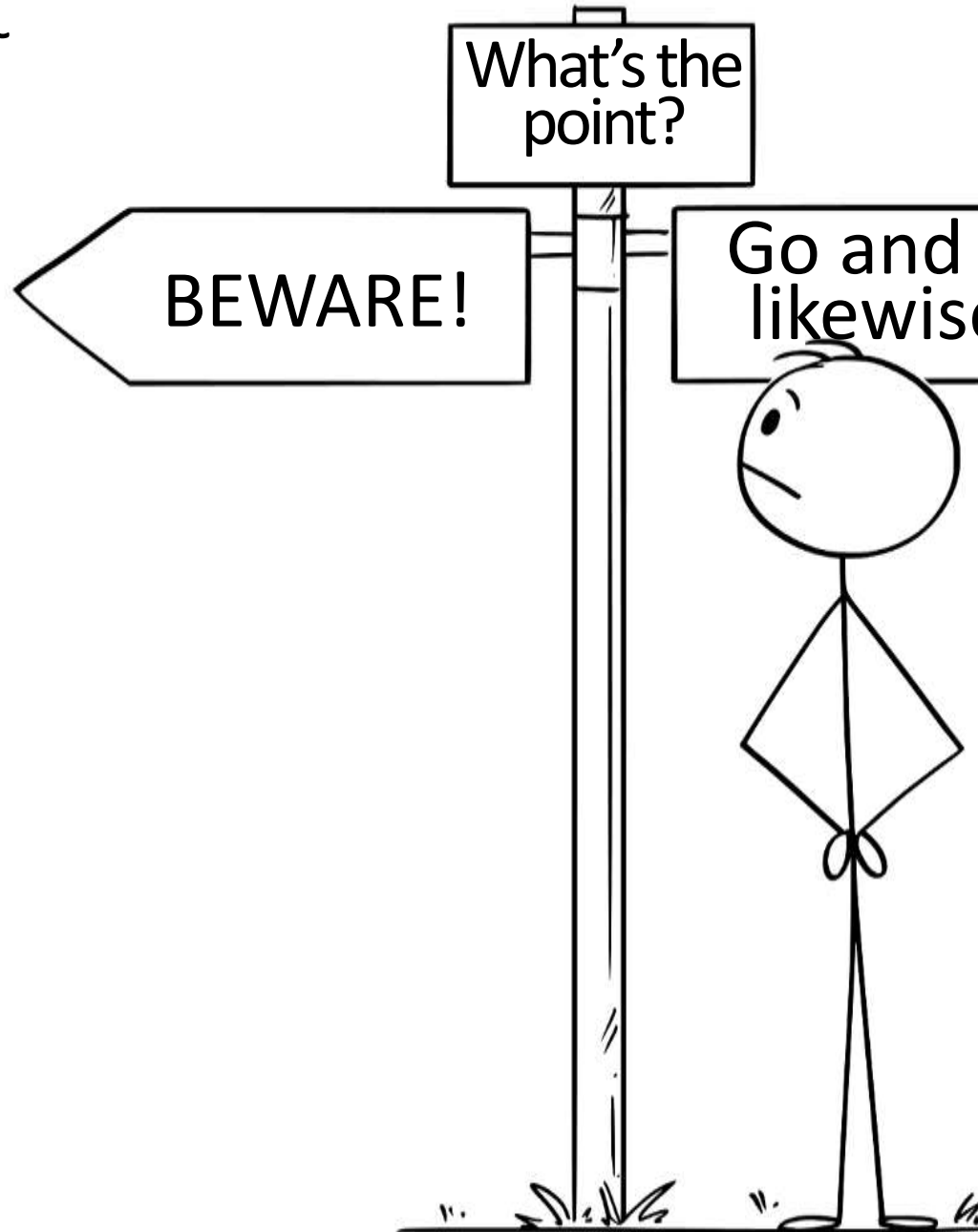
We don't know.



That's not the point

This is not a story of praise. It's a story of condemnation and destruction. It's not a story of, "Go and do likewise." It's a story of, "Beware!" It begins with Jesus telling his disciples, "Beware of the teachers of the law." (Luke 20:46).

The teachers of the law stole from widows. What little this widow had left they ended up controlling as part of the temple treasury. They got everything.





Isn't giving supposed to be sacrificial?

Yes. But we often confuse the meaning of the Bible word with the English word.

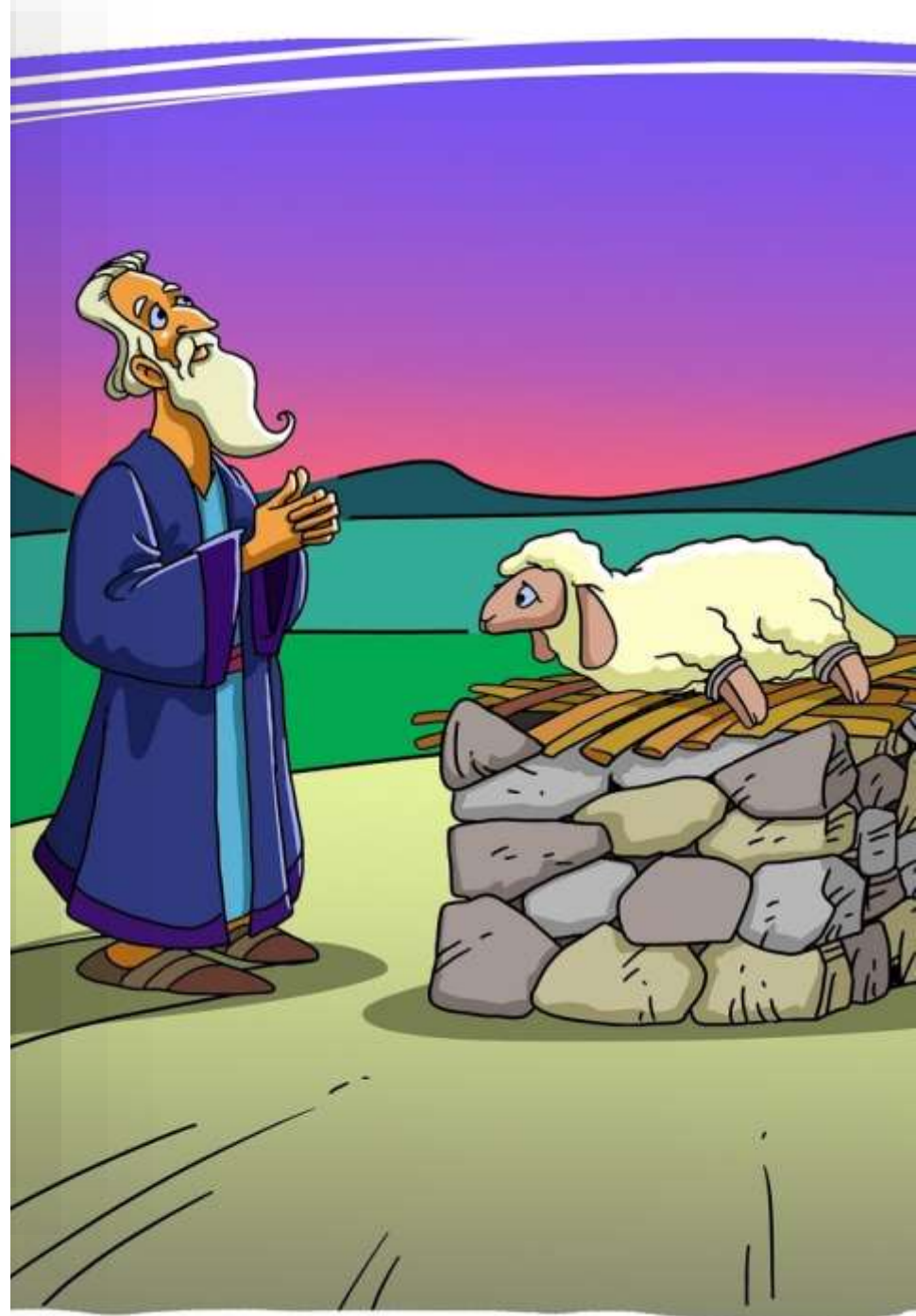
Our giving can be an acceptable sacrifice

- “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices [*thusiais*] God is pleased.” Hebrews 13:16
- “But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice [*thusian*], pleasing to God.” Php 4:18



A sacrifice is the
thing offered to
God

- The Greek word here is *thusia*. It means a sacrifice or an offering.
- The Septuagint uses *thusia* for the Hebrew word *zabach*: sacrifice and also for the Hebrew word *minchah*: gift or offering.





Sacrificial is
binary: Yes/no

In the Bible, a gift can be sacrificial. It can be an offering to God.

But it cannot be “more” sacrificial. It cannot be “less” sacrificial.

It can't be sacrificed just a little bit. It can't be sacrificed a whole lot. It's either an offering to God or it's not. It's either a sacrifice or it's not.



Sacrificial is
binary: Yes/no

Asking, “How sacrificial
was this gift?” makes no
sense.

It’s like asking “How dead
was the dove?”

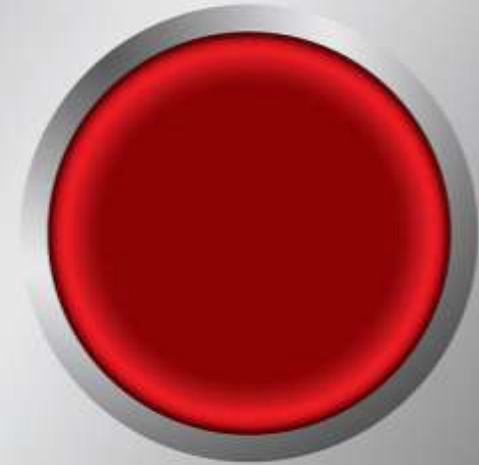
It was either sacrificed
(offered to God) or it
wasn’t.

Sacrificial is binary: Yes/no

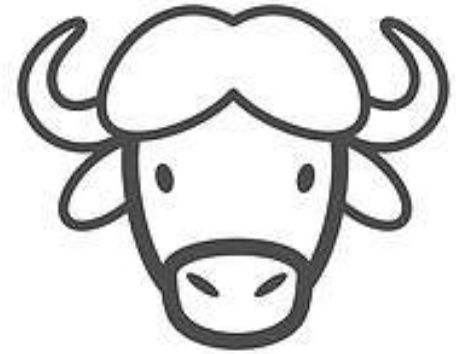
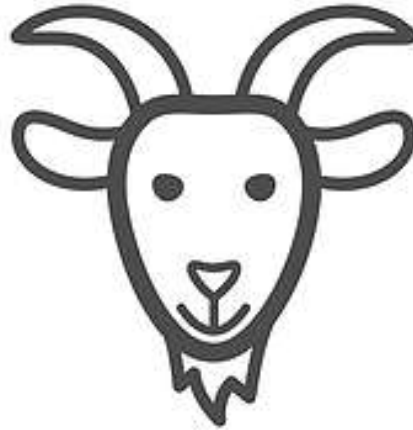
- Saying that a gift is sacrificial describes its function or use.
- A dove can be a sacrifice. A bull can be a sacrifice. A bull costs more than a dove. But a bull cannot be “more sacrificial” than a dove.
- In the Bible, the gift is either a sacrifice (an offering) or it’s not.



YES



NO



Sacrificial is
binary: Yes/no

In a Biblical context, “sacrificial” is not the same thing as “painful.”

“Sacrificial” describes the use of the gift.

In the Old Testament, a bull, a goat, a dove, or even flour could be used as a sacrifice or offering to God.



Sacrificial is binary: Yes/no

- Suppose a priest performed an animal sacrifice poorly and the animal suffered a lot. This didn't make the gift any more sacrificial.
- Suppose the priest was expert and there was no suffering. This didn't make the gift any less sacrificial.
- An animal couldn't be sacrificed "just a little bit" or "a whole lot." It was either sacrificed or it wasn't.



Sacrificial is
binary: Yes/no

A sacrifice is a gift or offering to God.

The question is not, “Was this gift
sacrificial?” The question is only, “Was this
sacrifice acceptable to God?”

Painful giving
is not better;
it's worse

Ascetics love painful
giving.

My painful giving
shows my
righteousness.

God loves cheerful
giving.

This is the best way
to enjoy your
wealth! Wooahoo!





Enjoyment
vs.
hoarding or
asceticism

When writing about wealth and sharing, Paul writes about

- enjoyment (I Tim 6:17),
- contentment (Phil 4:11), and
- extreme contentment (II Cor 9:8).

Why is this enjoyment so important? Paul is fighting a theology of hoarding and also a theology of asceticism. He is fighting both endless accumulation and total rejection.

Let's now turn to endless accumulation...



Use it
or
lose
it!

In 1 Tim 6:7, Paul writes,

- “For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.”
- Our ownership is going to disappear. This might seem negative. It’s not. It’s just obvious reality. He’s making an obvious statement. It’s not even particularly Christian. His pagan contemporaries said the same thing.



Use it or
lose it!

We might as well use it because we're going to lose it. Whether it's our money, our stuff, our time, our health, or our earthly lives, the same reality applies. It's ours, but it's not ours to keep.

What is bad stewardship?

- The question is not, “Are we a temporary manager?” The question is, “What kind of a temporary manager are we going to be?”
- There are two ways to be a bad steward: binging and burying.
- Jesus gives examples of binging bad stewards. He gives even more examples of burying bad stewards.



Burying bad stewards

In Matthew 25, the servant took what the master gave and buried it in the ground.

In Luke 19, he hid it away in a napkin.

Did these bad stewards know that it wasn't their money? Yes.

Did they know they would have to make an account to the owner at the end? Yes.

But they never used the money for its intended purpose.





What
motivates
burying bad
stewards?

“for I was afraid” (Luke 19:21)

“and I was afraid” (Matt 25:25)

So, they never used the money for its
intended purpose.



What report
did the
burying bad
stewards
give?

They protected it.

- “See, you still have what is yours.” (Matt 25:25)
- “here is your mina” (Luke 19:19)

The bad stewards protected what they had been given. They didn’t want to lose it. They were cautious. In fact, they were afraid.

So, they never used the money for its intended purpose.



What does God call the burying bad steward?

Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool. He was blessed with enormous wealth. And he just stacked it up in a barn. Luke 12:20 gives God's reaction.

“But God said to him, ‘You fool!’”

He never used the wealth for its intended purpose. In fact, he never used it for any purpose.

What is good stewardship?

God gives us all things as a gift. He gives them with a purpose. That purpose is “for enjoyment.” That’s why he gave it.

We can’t accomplish that purpose by burying the gift. That just leads to anxious hoarding and inevitable loss.

We can’t accomplish that purpose by binging with it. That leads to addiction and depression.

We accomplish that purpose by putting it to work.





What is good stewardship?

God gives us all things as a gift. He gives them with a purpose. That purpose is “for enjoyment.” That’s why he gave it.

We enjoy it by using it,

- To do intrinsically good works. [*agathoergein*]
- To become rich in beautifully good works. [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]
- To become a good, joyful, abundance sharer. [*eumetadotous einai*]
- To become a connected fellowship-community sharer. [*einai koinōnikous*]

~~Stress~~

Relax

Good
stewardship
isn't stressful

In Jesus' parable of the minas, one steward earned twice as much as the other.

Both were rewarded enormously.

We don't have to stress too much about perfect stewardship. Either way, the rewards are fantastic.

~~Stress~~

Relax

Good
stewardship
isn't stressful

We don't need to stress because there's plenty more where that came from.

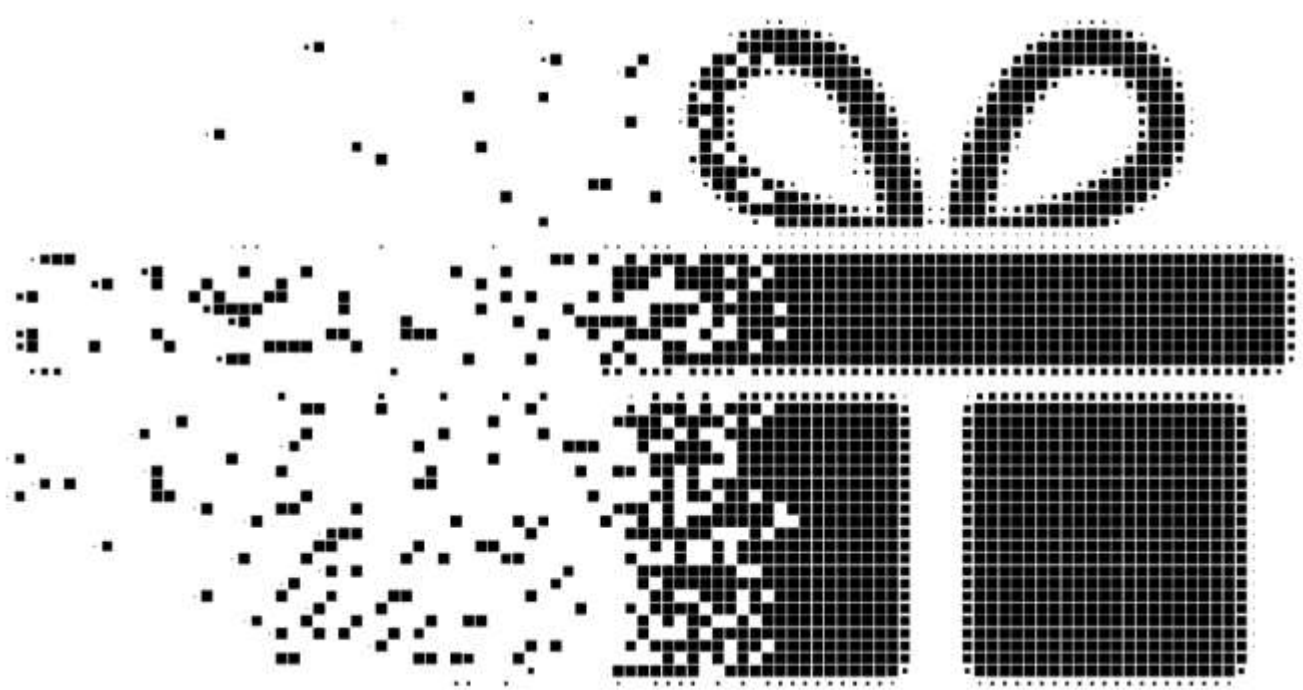
We don't need to stress because the whole purpose of the gift is for enjoyment.

Good stewardship is fun. It's actually the most fun we can have with what we've been given.



Good
stewardship
increases
ownership

The key is holding it LIGHTLY
“those who buy something, as if it
were not theirs to keep; those who
use the things of the world, as if not
engrossed in them. For this world in its
present form is passing away.” (1 Cor
7:30b-31 NIV)



Good
stewardship
increases
ownership

The key is holding it LIGHTLY

Why can we hold it lightly? Because we know it's all disappearing anyway.

Why can we hold it lightly? Because we know it's a gift and there's plenty more where that came from.



Good stewardship increases ownership

In 387 AD, John Chrysostom wrote of 1 Tim 6:17,

“The hoarder is a keeper, not a master, of wealth; a slave, not a Lord. For he would sooner give anyone part of his own flesh, than his buried gold. It’s as though he were ordered and compelled of someone to touch nothing of these hidden treasures. So with all earnestness he watches and keeps them, abstaining from them, as if it were another’s. And certainly, they are not his own. For what he can neither decide to share with others, nor distribute to the needy, even on pain of infinite punishments, how can he possibly account his own? How can he be a real owner of those things, of which he has neither free use, nor enjoyment?”



Good stewardship increases ownership

A hoarder is not truly an owner.

It's not his to use. It's not his to give. It's not his to enjoy.

John Chrysostom explains,

“A greedy man is one thing, and a rich man is another thing. The greedy man is not rich; he is in want of many things, and while he needs many things, he can never be rich.”

Good
stewardship
increases
abundance!

The greedy, the miser,
the hoarder – they
never live in
abundance.

They never have
“extra.”

They never have
wealth that they can
use freely.



Good stewardship
increases
ownership

The greedy, the miser,
the hoarder – that
wealth is not really
theirs. They're not free
to enjoy it. They can
only anxiously protect
it. They bury it just to
die with it.

That's foolish. And it's
not fun. The only two
outcomes are loss
during life or loss at
death.





Die rich?

People may ask,
“How much did he leave?”
The answer is always the same.



Die rich?

People may ask,
“How much did he leave?”
The answer is always the same.
“All of it.”

No one dies rich. Everyone dies
with nothing.



If our only hope is in wealth, then we'll never have extra.

There is no limit to possible future catastrophes. Theft. Taxes. Ransom demands. Communist revolution. Confiscation. Uncovered health expenses. Dementia. Market crash. War. Hyperinflation. Divorce. Lawsuits. It never ends. We can never use our wealth because we might need it someday.

“for I was afraid” (Luke 19:21)
Parable of the talents

“and I was afraid” (Matt 25:25)
Parable of the minas



Having extra or
“abundance”
requires God

It is only through
placing our trust in a
richly providing God
that we can have
extra.

If God will be
providing for our
tomorrow, we
become free to enjoy
more of what we
have today. This is a
great gain.



We don't need
that much for
contentment

“But godliness actually
is a means of great
gain when
accompanied by
contentment. For we
have brought nothing
into the world, so we
cannot take anything
out of it, either. If we
have food and
covering, with these
we shall be content.”
(1 Tim 6:6-8)





We get more abundance

When our future is fully and richly provided for, we don't need that much to be content right now. We don't need to hoard up for every possible future event. This converts so much of what we have into "extra." It becomes an abundance. It becomes a gain. It gives us freedom to use it. We don't get less ownership of our stuff. We get more!

Good stewardship is fun!

- Paul rejects asceticism and painful giving.
- Paul rejects pointless accumulation and hoarding.
- Paul explains how to have fun with your wealth!

