

Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees



Corporate Stewardship God's Mission

Session Three – Part Two



Introduction: Ronald E. Vallet writes in *Stepping Stones of the Steward*, “A consensus is emerging that stewardship is not simply a means to fund a noble end. To say that stewardship exists to facilitate the mission of the church is inadequate...Participation in mission finds its rootage in and grows out of stewardship. Mission is what God calls us to because we are stewards. Our identity is ‘steward.’ The task to which God calls us is ‘mission.’ As that understanding takes hold, funding the mission will no longer be a major concern or problem.” (page 3)

Do you agree with Vallet’s statement? Explain your answer.

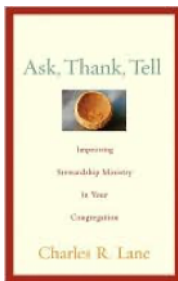
**Mission without stewardship is impossible;
Stewardship without mission is unnecessary.**

Harry G. Coiner writes in *The Secret of God’s Plan*, “The New Testament abounds with evidence that the church of Jesus Christ is a living community of faith in and through which God is working out His plan in the fullness of time...Luther states that it is through His Spirit-transformed people that God can most effectively speak and act, work and fight, tear down and rebuild as He rules His world. The Christian reenacts the pattern of Christ’s voluntary self-giving as he also takes his neighbors and their needs upon himself as his own ‘cross’ (1 Peter 3:21) and so offers ‘to give myself to be, as it were, a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered Himself to me.’” (Pages 12-13)

- How does a Christian “speak and act” for God in the area of mission?
- How does a Christian “work and fight” for God in the area of mission?
- How does a Christian “tear down and rebuild” for God in the area of mission?

Coiner continues, “The church is never a closed organization; it always reaches beyond itself because being reconciled to God eventuates in the ministry of reconciliation to the world. When the church is *reconciled people reconciling people* it finds its life and true meaning.” (Page 15)

- What is your congregation doing to look outside of itself in mission?



Charles R. Lane makes the following statements in *Ask, Thank, Tell*:

“Another way to think about what Jesus says in Luke 12 (*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*) is to talk about ‘acting your way into a new way of thinking,’ as opposed to ‘thinking your way into a new way of acting.’”

“I am convinced,” says Lane, “that it is far easier, and far more lasting to act your way into a new way of thinking.” (Page 55)

- *What implications are there for mission and stewardship in Lane’s comment?*

“One of the foundational truths taught in the Bible is the importance of good stewardship,” write Rouse and Van Gelder in *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation*. “Congregations stand at the center of God’s redemptive work in the world. They are to enact the reality of redemption in all of life within their own ministry and participate in God’s mission in the world as agents of reconciliation within the larger community they seek to serve. This is the biblical understanding of a servant ministry of stewardship—being ‘servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.’” (Page 111)

They suggest four implications for congregations understanding their identity in the light of stewardship:

- God’s mission and the means to sustain it belong to God.
- Congregations are corporate communities that steward God’s mission in a particular place and time.
- To join a congregation is to respond to God’s call to join in God’s mission as a steward.
- Stewards are expected to be trustworthy as well as accountable.

Stewardship is not optional for congregations, nor is it just about meeting the budget. Stewardship stands at the very core and center of Christian identity both for the congregation and for individuals as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Comment on the following quote from a church leader:

“Congregations withdraw and withhold mission support (from district and synod) for any of a variety of reasons. When this happens it puts the whole church at risk, offers the poorest of stewardship models for their membership, even poisons the vital relationship with the congregation and the regional judicatory and church wide expression.”

