



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

FEATUERS

produced by Baptist Press

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July 11, 1969

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(another in a series)

INSTITUTIONAL STEWARDSHIP

by T. B. Maston

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There has been a great deal of emphasis on the place of stewardship in the life of the individual child of God. There is needed a comparable emphasis on institutional stewardship.

Christians should be good stewards of things material, which will be the only aspect of stewardship discussed in this article. Institutions and agencies that Christian stewards help to support with their tithes and offerings should also be good stewards. This includes the local church and every denominational agency or institution.

We preach and teach that all of a Christian's possessions belong to God and are to be used in ways that will honor him. We also believe that the tithes and offerings a Christian gives to his church are uniquely holy.

Those tithes and offerings do not lose their holiness or sacredness when they are pooled with the gifts of others in the church treasury. They have been or should have been dedicated to God and are to be treated as a sacred trust.

This means that church treasurers, finance committees, deacons, and church members in general should have a deep sense of responsibility to God for the way the money in the church treasury is used. Proper consideration should also be given to the work of the Lord outside of the local church. It is just as tragic for a church to be selfish as it is for an individual Christian.

Institutional stewardship reaches beyond the local church. The money that goes from the church to the association, the state convention, or to support our work on national and world levels is still "holy unto our God."

Some of that money has been given sacrificially. We hope that all of it was given with a prayer that it might be used to promote Christ's cause in the world.

The preceding means that anyone who in any way determines the distribution and use of that money should have a sense of sacred stewardship. How dare any committee or any person in a place of leadership to waste or misuse any of it.

For example, shame on anyone or any group that builds more elaborately than need d. We should have attractive and efficient facilities, but it is wrong use of God's money to build to impress. This applies to local churches as well as to denominational institutions such as colleges, universities, and seminaries.

Let me sum up by saying as strongly as possible that everyone who has any place of leadership in a local church or in any phase of the work of the denomination should have just as keen a sense of stewardship responsibility as he expects the humblest Christian to have.

Permit me to direct a special word to church and denominational employes. We should have a double sense of stewardship responsibility. Like any other child of God we should feel accountable to him for the faithful stewardship of our total income and should cheerfully give tithes and offerings to support the work of our church and denomination.

We should also have a unique sense of stewardship for the support we receive from the tithes and offerings of others. We should have a sense of responsibility first of all to God but also to the people who provide the income for us and our families.



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CHRISTIAN CONCERN

by T. B. Maston

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Christianity is a religion with a tender heart. The centrality of love is one of its most distinctive qualities. The epitome of its gospel is: "For God so loved the world..." Its chief commandment is supreme love for God and a second like it is love for neighbor. The natural expression of the Christian's love for others is his concern for them.

The real source of the Christian's compassion and concern is his vital life-changing union with the compassionate Christ. As was true of Christ, the Christian's concern will be individualized as well as generalized.

For example, he will be concerned not simply for the colored peoples of the world but also for the colored individuals he knows. His heart will go out not only to the poor, the needy, the neglected in general, but also in a very special and personal way to those he contacts from day to day. How much have we let the compassion and concern of Christ grip our souls and express itself through our lives?

Another searching question is: How broad is our concern? E. Stanley Jones once said he could wish that his arms were long enough to reach around every man in the world. This was his way of expressing his love for the peoples of the world. Our love and concern should be as broad as the world and as deep as human need.

There is something wrong with us as children of God if we can look out on our world with its suffering, its sorrow, and its sin without having a tug in our hearts. There is something wrong if we do not have a sincere desire to do something to relieve the burdens of the world and also to correct conditions that contribute to those burdens.

Many of the people among the teeming multitudes of the world are hungry. Frank Laubach, who possibly knows the restless masses better than anybody else, has said that four-fifths of them go to bed hungry every night. Among these are countless little children, many of whom literally starve to death every year. We need the eyes to see and the heart to feel for these starving masses who incidentally are on the move today and may remake our world tomorrow.

Also, the Christian's concern should be broad enough to include the old, the lonely, the insecure, the frustrated. His heart should reach out to those who are deformed and twisted in body or who are demented or handicapped in mind.

He should be concerned about and do what he can to lift and encourage the social and moral outcasts of our society. Some of these may be among the world's untouchables, but Christ knew no untouchables. And we his followers should not consider anyone untouchable.

The concern of Christ led to action. He had compassion; he wept. He had compassion; he healed. He had compassion; he raised from the dead. The proof of our concern is what it leads us to do.

We should do what we can for the victims of modern society. We should not restrict ourselves, however, to a healing ministry. Our concern should lead us to do what we can to correct the conditions that provide the wrecks of society. We should not be satisfied merely to provide an ambulance at the foot of the precipice; we should build a fence and set up warning signals at the top of the precipice.