

The Heart of Stewardship

Being a good steward of what God has given us is more than merely checking off the list that we gave God a portion of our time, talents, and treasures. When it comes to stewardship, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. As we wrap up our series on stewardship, we will take a case study approach in examining two examples of stewardship—one good and one bad. One gave themselves to God while the other only gave their possessions.

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

^{8:1} And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵ And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. ⁶ So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.¹

Acts 4:32-5:11

^{4:32} All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

^{5:1} Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. ³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it

¹ All Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.”⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.⁶ Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.⁸ Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”⁹ Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Churches in Macedonia 2 Corinthians 8:1-5	Ananias & Sapphira Acts 5:1-11
Captivated by grace	Captured by Satan
Lived in great affliction	Lived in great affluence
Gave out of their poverty	Gave out of their surplus
Exhibited selfless generosity	Exhibited selfish duplicity

Gave as much as possible	Gave as little as possible
Proactive – they initiated the gift	Reactive – they were caught up in the emotion of the crowd
Begged for the privilege to give	Felt an obligation to give
Concerned for the needs of others	Concerned for the opinion of others
Act of worship	Appearance of worship
Confirmed a real faith	Revealed a phony faith
An encouraging example to follow	A frightening example to avoid
<i>God doesn't want our time, talents, and/or treasures. He wants our heart.</i>	