

# Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

## On Sacrificial Giving

For many years now, you have heard that stewardship is so much more than simply raising money to meet the Church's need for support! Stewardship is the way you see your life in relationship to a giving God, and how, in all aspects of your life, you respond to God's tremendous generosity.

The financial results of our responsible stewardship is that the work desperately needing to be done by your church, and other charities that we support, in fact does get done.

But, the motive of our giving is not to meet these needs, but to meet our own personal need to respond to God's overwhelming generosity to us by becoming givers ourselves.

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The Bible uses a word, often misunderstood, to help us see this more clearly. The word is sacrifice. In the Bible, to offer a sacrifice is to give a portion of something in order to make the whole "holy."

For example, to rescue us from anxiety about all of our time, God asks us to give a portion of our time and dedicate it exclusively to him. "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy." Giving him one day, freely, has the effect of hallowing all our days and all our time.

To enrich all of our relationships and give them quality, God asks us to accept special exclusive conditions for one relationship, the covenant of marriage. To be faithful in that one is to find enrichment in all relationships.

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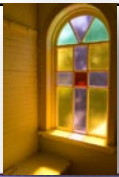
**This is the principle of sacrifice,  
not seen as we often do, as a giving up of something  
but as a dedication of a part of something that enriches the quality of the whole.**

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In our financial stewardship, the same principle holds true. Money has the potential to rule our lives. Its ability to complicate our lives by its presence or absence is bewildering. To have adequate or abundant supplies of money is to be tempted to value ourselves, to see our self-worth in terms of our money and our money alone. To be without adequate money is to be caught in another kind of bondage, the bondage of continual debt and sometimes irrational spending. But the basic bondage, in each case, is the bondage of self-doubt.

To rescue us from these potential (and, for some of us, actual) chains, God says, "Make a sacrifice! Dedicate a portion of your money to me, without strings, so the whole of your money, your attitude toward it and its power over you, can be redeemed."

That's why we speak of giving to God in terms of **proportionate giving**. The portion we set as our response to God's generosity becomes our sacrifice, through which, if it is reasonably set, God can hallow all of our money, indeed, all of our life.



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So, when you consider your pledge, you are considering the quality of your whole life, its values and its standards. To dedicate a responsible portion of your income to God, to make a sacrifice to God that is proportionate, is to invite God, in the most concrete way we know, to hallow the whole.

That's a long way from raising money for the Church. It should be! The decision we make about our pledge, our giving, is one of the most important spiritual decisions we make.

### A Stewardship Prayer

Open, O Lord, the eyes of all people to behold thy gracious hand  
in all thy works, that, rejoicing in thy whole creation,  
we may honor thee with our substance and be faithful stewards of thy  
bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

(adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, page 329)

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This article was written by The Rt. Rev. John H. MacNaughton, 7th Bishop of the Diocese of West Texas and included as an example in his book entitled, *More Blessed to Give...* Copies of the book are available at the Diocese by contacting [nancy.stinson@dwtx.org](mailto:nancy.stinson@dwtx.org).