

starters for Sunday

Moderators' Worship Notes: Very Rev Albert Bogle

Stewardship Season

The Stewardship and Finance and the Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank the Very Rev Albert Bogle, Minister of Bo'ness: St Andrew's, for his thoughts on the stewardship of money.

A note from Albert: Some of the prayers below might be better suited to the reader's own private devotions rather than public prayer. The hope is that they might stimulate a minister or worship leader to write a prayer for public worship.

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Introduction

Christian Stewardship is a fundamental part of Christian Discipleship. It is concerned with the gifts of God and the way we use these gifts. It is concerned with the love and commitment of God to the world and its people, and with our response to God's love and God's commitment.

Worship has a pivotal role in any consideration of Christian Stewardship in the life of the Church. In worship we give thanks for the gifts of God; we confess our failure to use these gifts as God expects them to be used; we explore the pages of the Bible and engage in theological reflection on God's giving and our response; we offer to God our time, our talent and our money to advance the kingdom.

Four former Moderators of the General Assembly kindly agreed to take us on a journey through some of their personal thoughts about the stewardship of money. They offer us prayers, sermon notes and hymn suggestions. These worship notes are offered in the prayerful hope that they might help worship leaders to tackle the sometimes prickly theme of "money" during worship. However, it is up to the reader to adapt these as he/she sees appropriate.

I wish to express my gratitude to the contributors for their time and assistance in writing this material which can be found on the Church of Scotland [Starters for Sunday pages](#) and on the [Resourcing Mission](#) website, where additional archive material can also be found.

Rev Alan W Gibson

Head of Stewardship



The Background

[2 Corinthians 8: 1-15](#)

This passage helps us to see that from the beginning the early church had to fundraise. We see how Paul was moved with compassion for the poor and needy in Palestine; not a lot has changed. Christians today are in great need and although few in number, the Christians in Palestine are still facing tremendous hardship.

Paul writing to the Corinthians in the above text is aware of their good intentions to send help and support to the struggling mother church in Jerusalem. He had spent over ten years trying to encourage all the churches to raise funds to support the Jerusalem Appeal. For Paul, this collection was an important contribution to building a sense of community and belonging within the church. He initiated it after he had made his first famine relief visit with Barnabas in 46AD. ([Acts 11: 29-30](#)) Paul encouraged all his churches to support Jerusalem.

He writes to the Corinthians reminding them that they were the first of the churches to give generously when the appeal first started. In [1 Corinthians 16: 1](#) Paul gives them advice as to how the collection should be uplifted. He suggests that everyone should set aside some money every week according to their personal circumstances.

However it would appear that between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, the custom of collecting for the 'Jerusalem Appeal' had fallen into disuse. Once again he encourages the Corinthians to complete what they have started. He suggests in [2 Corinthians 8: 6](#) that he will send Titus back to Corinth to bring the appeal to a close.

There is no doubt that there was a genuine need in Palestine. This must be the first co-ordinated worldwide stewardship appeal within the early church. Here are some of the issues they were facing:

- The Palestinian economy was on its knees.
- Famine and food shortages continued.
- Double taxation and overcrowding all added to poor living conditions.
- The whole church was being invited to share the continual cost of supporting visitors who came to Jerusalem to engage with the mother church.



- There was a common desire for Christian Jews to come and settle in and around Jerusalem.
- All of this added to the financial burden of the Jerusalem church.
- The relief fund also highlighted the interdependence of the believers as a worldwide community.
- They believed the Kingdom was coming and they awaited it with anticipation sharing one another's burdens.

Since we've started... let's finish!

[2 Corinthians 8: 1-15](#)

Context of the passage

You can find a similar story to catch the attention. The aim is to draw people into thinking about the unfinished tasks in our lives.

Over the years I've spent a considerable amount of my time travelling in the different parts of the world. Almost everywhere I go I see unfinished buildings. The first floor is complete, however the metal rods for the next floor protrude up into the sky. To my mind it looks unfinished but to the person building the house it is an investment for the next stage of the building when the money becomes available. It is often a dream that is never completed.

It's not how you start that matters but how you finish. For me the finish is the most rewarding and the most difficult to achieve. I find many people offer help on the spur of the moment, they will be in touch, they would love to contribute, but the plain fact is they never follow through on their initial promise.

How often have we had discussions in the church about our dreams? We make plans. We might even embark upon them, but somehow the project never gets finished. Members make financial promises but the money is never collected. Use the background to this passage to draw parallels with unfinished modern equivalents e.g. issues that need to be brought to a conclusion in our lives, in our communities and in our congregations.

Turning to the passage choose to draw out from the following three points, ideas that may help begin to move forward the issues we have been talking about to a conclusion or a new beginning.



1. Generosity is a Gift that explores Grace

So what is it that we can learn from Paul's letter about Christian Stewardship?

- Generosity is an attribute that is given to individuals and to a community by God. ([2 Corinthians 8: 1-2](#)) Generosity comes from a heart filled with thanksgiving because we have been saved by grace. ([Ephesians 2: 8](#))
- We are saved from ourselves, our selfishness, our own egos.

In verses 1 & 2 Paul gives an example of the group of churches in Macedonia who had been under great stress and trial, yet who found time and energy to have compassion for the needs of the Christians who were under great persecution in Jerusalem. Such people could have been self-obsessed, but instead they looked out beyond themselves to see the needs of others.

Paul seeks to explain that the magnitude of this generosity is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit at work in our hearts that enables us to understand the amazing gift of Christ. ([Romans 12: 6-8](#))

Here is an opportunity to invite the congregation to reflect on the gift of forgiveness. The implication of the gift must touch all of our lives. Can we see beyond our own troubles and help others in need?

2. Generosity is learned from the Poor

- He became poor so that we who are poor might become rich through his poverty. ([2 Corinthians 8: 8](#), [Philippians 2: 1-10](#)).
- Forgiveness in one sense makes the forgiver poorer. Forgiveness is a costly act. It also makes the forgiven richer.
- Gratitude is the response of the forgiven in an attempt to recognise the cost of forgiveness. Gratitude and generosity flow from each other.
- Remember the example of pulling resources had already been explored in [Acts 2: 44-46](#). [4: 32-37](#).

In many parts of the Bible we are invited to reflect upon our attitude to the way we give. These passages bring to our attention the extravagant generosity of the poor. There is an opportunity to reflect upon what it means to be materially poor and also spiritually poor.



A few years ago I was visiting a project we in St Andrew's Church Bo'ness support in India. We had collected some funds and a group of elders and members had taken the money as a gift to help support the work as part of our visit. Towards the end of the visit, the pastor and a small group of his congregation took us to a restaurant for our dinner. At the end of the evening the pastor made it clear that he wanted to pay the bill. I duly agreed thinking that the next day I would give him the money in private so as not to embarrass him in front of the group.

I well remember the next morning taking the Pastor to the side and offering to pay for the dinner. He looked at me with a quiet serene nod of the head common to the Indian culture and simply said, "Pastor Bogle you must allow the poor to be generous too". These words have never left me. What he was doing far out-stripped our generosity. He was living out what he believed. He was blessing us with the extravagant generosity that he believed he had received through Christ. His gift has touched and shaped my life down through the years.

Perhaps you can find an illustration that reflects the above experience.

Think about Ministries and Mission allocations. What can we learn from the Macedonian Churches?

3. Generosity calls us to action

James in his epistle warns the Christian to become a 'doer' of the word and not simply a passive listener. When we have been touched by generosity action is demanded of us.

- Is it time to look around and complete the programmes and the promises that we have made in our lives and left unfinished?
- Is it time to pay the price of forgiveness?
- Is it time to let the poor show their generosity?

Above all do we need to ask God to change our hearts that we might be open to receive the gift of extravagant generosity, and in doing so, become the immensely cheerful givers that God longs to see among his people?



Time with Children



Here is a painting called the "Charity of a Beggar at Ornans" by Gustave Courbet. The painting seeks to remind us that the poor also wish to be charitable and kind to those who they see in greater need.

Jesus told a wonderful story about a very generous widow woman who had only two small coins left in her purse. When it came to the offering in the temple she opened her purse and gave the two coins into the collection box. The Bible teaches us that God looks upon our heart not our outward appearance. The

implication is that the gifts of the poor, because they are given with a generous heart, are always blessed by God.

Prayers

The following prayers are really for personal reflections and private devotions rather than public prayer. I prayerfully hope that these might stimulate a minister or worship leader to write a prayer for public worship.

Making Changes

[Ecclesiastes 5: 10-15](#)

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of a labourer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich man will not let him sleep... As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. (E.S.V.)

All giving and generous Lord,

I must seem so selfish

What is it about me that makes me so attracted to stuff?

I'm like a magnet



I collect all kinds of objects.
From useless ornaments to useful tools
So many things I just want to own
I collect things for amusement.
Things that make me feel better
Things that make me look good
Things that make me look ridiculous
Things that get broken
Things that need fixed
Things that are stolen
Things that don't fit
Things for which I have no use
I hoard them
I hold on to them
Sometimes they become an extension to my life
They are part of my "life frame"
I allow myself to be controlled by lifeless objects
I say I don't worship these things
but too often I do.

Lord
Help me to start making changes
Release me from the things that control me.
Give me the courage to say no to retail therapy
To say no if I don't have a use for an object
Give me the grace to say no to keeping up with the latest styles
Give me the insight to know the difference between need and greed
Help me each day to let go of all this stuff that surrounds me
Turn my heart to service and in doing so make my life fruitful

By Albert Bogle, St Andrew's Church, Bo'ness



Promises

[Ecclesiastes 5: 4-7](#)

When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear. (E.S.V.)

Lord,

When I say

I'll do something

do you believe me?

Do others believe me?

I'm sorry I'm so undependable

Sometimes I'm just fickle

I withhold my promise

because things haven't gone my way

I know I could do more

The thing is

I can so easily forget the promises I make.

I never increased my offering

When I said I would

I never made the phone call

When I said I would

I never prayed along with my friend.

When I said I would



You see Lord,
I get over confident
I make the promise
It makes me look good
Then when all is well or not so well
I back-track
I'm great at re-interpreting the things I said I would do!

Lord,
I don't want to be mean.
So why do I do things I don't want to do?
And why do I leave undone the things I've promised?

Lord forgive me
I've promised so much over the years
And delivered so little
I make excuses
I say it's the wrong time
I say I'll get round to it

Today Lord,
Before I make any more promises
I'm going to start honouring the back log
Give me the grace and the courage
to fulfil my promises

By Albert Bogle, St Andrew's Church, Bo'ness



Casual Worship

[Ecclesiastes 5: 1-3](#)

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.

Lord,

I'm sorry

I was unprepared.

I walked in,

I smiled briefly at the person on the door,

took a seat and continued talking to myself.

It's amazing what we think but never reveal

Its hard to put life in frame

Sealed up and glazed over

Lord I want too much

Help me guard my steps and keep silence

My thoughts,

My motives,

My reasons - were all wrong.

I kept talking,

thinking,

praying,

looking for answers.

I want to change my life frame

Lord I think too much

Help me guard my thoughts and keep silence



I sang the hymns,
but I didn't really participate.
I felt awkward,
Out of place,
Out of tune,
Out of sorts.
Completely out of the picture
Too much going on in my head yet not a word spoken.

Lord I sulk too much

Help me guard my moods and keep silence

I should have taken time to listen
To draw near
To tune in.
To be silent.
I didn't wait for heaven to touch me
I prayed prayers in a fool's voice

Lord I speak too much

Help me guard my tongue and keep silence

Lord,
Help me chose the frame for my life
Help me put the my life in order
Help me put things in perspective
Help me see things as they can be
Help me believe my life can change

By Albert Bogle, St Andrew's Church, Bo'ness



Temptations

[Matthew 4: 1-11](#)

Jesus is tested in the wilderness

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'

Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."'

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written:

*"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*

Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'

Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (N.I.V.)

Lord,

You went forty days and forty nights without food.

I admire your strength and concentration.

I can hardly go a day without thinking about my next meal

Your life was never easy

You chose the road of sacrifice and service

You put others first

You chose to deny yourself



Instead you took up a cross
You chose the nails
You chose stones rather than bread
You chose a crown of thorns rather than a throne
Teach me what it means
To put others first
To go the second mile
To love my enemies
To turn the other cheek

Lord
You were tempted just like all of us are tempted
Give me the strength to resist temptation
Help me turn my temptations into stepping stones of grace.

By Albert Bogle, St Andrew's Church, Bo'ness

Testing

[Malachi 3: 10](#)

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. (E.S.V.)

Lord,
I've been thinking
Testing in your mind is not always a bad thing
To be tested and come through the trial,
gives a person confidence
You even ask us to test you out
You're not afraid
To be put to the test
To be put on trial
You're no one's debtor



You simply ask us to be honest
You ask us not to hold back
Not to grudge our offerings
Instead you make a promise
If we will give generously and not hold back
You will match anything we give
Indeed you promise more than we could imagine.

Forgive me Lord
When I refuse the challenge of your generosity
When I play safe and hold on to what I have
Turn me around Lord,
Give me the courage
To bring my gifts into your storehouse
And give me the faith to open my heart to receive your blessing

By Albert Bogle, St Andrew's Church, Bo'ness



Further Advice

For any advice or ideas on Stewardship Programmes for your church, please contact:

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Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Living Stones](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Very Rev Albert Bogle for providing us with this material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

