

A Stewardship Lesson From an Unlikely Teacher

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One of my favorite writers is Stephen King. I am not too wild about the scary stories he writes, but you can find some great stuff in his other stories (I especially like, "The Green Mile"). Also, he is a serious baseball fan which always gets you some points in my book. I would never have expected to find something in Stephen King's words that would be useful in teaching biblical stewardship, but here it is

*"A couple of years ago I found out what 'you can't take it with you' means. I found out while I was lying in a ditch at the side of a country road. Covered with mud and blood and with the tibia of my right leg poking out of the side of my jeans like a branch of a tree taken down in a thunderstorm. I had a MasterCard in my wallet, but when you're lying in a ditch with broken glass in your hair, no one accepts MasterCard. . . . We come in naked and broke. We may be dressed when we go out, but we're just as broke. Warren Buffet? Going to go out broke. Bill Gates? Going out broke. Tom Hanks? Going out broke. Steve King? Broke. Not a crying dime. All the money you earn, all the stocks you buy, all the mutual funds you trade - all of that is mostly smoke and mirrors. It's still going to be a quarter-past getting late whether you tell the time on a Timex or a Rolex. So I want to you to consider making your life one long gift to others. And why not? All you have is on loan anyway. All that lasts is what you pass on."*

Every one of us would agree with Stephen King. We know, without any doubt, that we are going out just as naked as we came in. For some, just as wrinkly and bald as well.

So, why do we live the way we do? Why do we spend so much of our energy acquiring stuff? How come we don't give more away?

All the studies indicate that the average American gives approximately 2 to 3 percent to charity or their church. What are we waiting for? Some Christians, probably many of you, actually give 10%, a tithe. For some, giving a tenth might be a significant sacrifice, but for most of us, a tithe is just a tip of the iceberg.

Eighty to ninety percent of the giving in this country is in cash. However, 90% of our wealth is in assets other than cash. That means that when we think about giving, we don't even consider 90% of our resources. In other words, some of our "best givers" are giving 10% of a tenth of their wealth.

For example, let's say you bought a house twenty years ago. During the past two decades it has appreciated, your family has changed, and it is time to move on. When you sell the house you make a significant profit on your original investment. So, what would most of us do? We would probably invest the money in a more expensive house.

However, at the moment of transaction, you had your hands on a significant amount of cash. Money at your disposal, to be used any way you choose. Moments like that, few of us think about anyone but ourselves. We are conscious of our own net worth, of how much we can accumulate, about the nicer house we can own.

Jesus' warning about storing up treasures on earth is not just for the rich like Stephen King. He was speaking to all of us who are striving for larger houses, nicer cars, fancier wardrobes, and bigger storage closets. I think Jesus would agree with Stephen King when he said, "All that lasts is what you pass on!"

*by Terry Austin*