

EDITORIAL: Today is your day for stewardship

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Once upon a time, I attended a church—and you’re probably familiar with the type—where longtime-and-savvy members intentionally planned weekend trips about this time of year. They knew October was “stewardship month. “ That, of course, meant four Sundays in a row when the pastor bombarded us with sermons about tithing. Most of the church-skippers, or at least a solid minority of them, already tithed and believed in tithing. They just didn’t want to hear about it every Sunday for a month.

Those fellow church members who carefully planned fall-foliage excursions to evade tithing sermons came to mind recently. Our New Voice Media partnership decided the [cover package](#) for this edition of the *Standard* and our partner newspapers would focus on stewardship. Oh, great. You probably don’t want to think about tithing and/or church-giving, either. And some of you will write letters arguing that tithing isn’t even appropriate for Christians.

Editor Marv Knox

Still, we all need to think about stewardship from time to time. Thinking about what stewardship means and how we plan our budgets—as families, as churches and as religious organizations—is good discipline, particularly during periods of economic difficulty.

So, since we’ve raised the issue, I’d like to channel our thinking to three aspects of stewardship:

- **Money.** “Show me your budget, and I’ll show you your priorities,” a wise seminary professor once told his students. “If you say you value something but don’t allocate your budget to make sure you get it done, then it’s not as

important to you as you claim.”

He was correct, of course. Baptists are good at knowing what to say about our values, but sometimes we fall short of performance when we fail to put our money where our mouths are. If we say we believe in missions and ministry and evangelism but fail to support those vital tasks with our personal and church budgets, then we prove we don’t mean it. This has been glaringly clear the past few months, as the nation debates what to do about health care. Many Christians argue care for those whom Jesus called “the least of these” is “the church’s job.” But very few churches have mobilized their budgets to provide that kind of support for anyone in their community, much less the state and beyond. So, do we mean what we say? Do our budgets validate our beliefs?

- **Natural resources.** Sometimes, when we discuss environmental issues, we get sidetracked by the debate over global warming. But more and more, people of care and goodwill are setting that debate aside and focusing on preservation of natural resources. Call it a parental—or maybe a grandparental—impulse. We don’t want to be the generation that irreparably fouled the air and polluted the water.

So, we’re seeing a green revolution. It’s a civil action in an incivil society. And increasing numbers of churches and Christians are getting involved. It should be a testimony of our call to creation care.

- **Time.** At its root, how we spend our time is the stewardship of our lives. Time is our most nonrenewable resource. Spend it, and we never get it back.

So, as a matter of Christian stewardship, we must think about how we utilize the gift of the moments that aggregate into our lives. This requires balance, because not only should we work and work hard, we also need time for fellowship with family and friends, worship and ministry, sabbath

relaxation and rest, and reflection upon all we hold important.

But we don't have time to waste, because wasting time is wasting the life God gave us. As we recognize the holiness of being created in God's image and the value of the life entrusted to us, we become prayerful, thoughtful and careful stewards of not only our years, but also our seconds.