

# Stewarding our Finances

By David P. King

Too often in our stewardship of finances, we rarely talk about money *directly*. Instead, both in and out of the church, we have learned to perfect talking *around* money. Money remains *the* taboo topic for American Christians -- something too dangerous to address head on because of the power it holds over us. At the same time, we also know that our relationship to money is perhaps one of the best windows into the practices of the Christian life.

In my interviews with hundreds of clergy and lay leaders, few disagree with the role that our relationship with money plays in the lives of the faithful. Those same religious leaders, however, admit struggling mightily to integrate the stewardship of finances into a broader vision of discipleship and faith formation. As long as the stewardship of finances is correlated in our minds as a "necessary evil" to raise the church budget, there is little incentive to broaden the conversation. As long as our personal finances remain simply the process of paying our monthly bills, then a holistic vision of stewarding our finances will receive little interest from people of faith.

While our society makes clear that money has power, our faith traditions reframe this notion to assert that money can often have power over us. When we lift money out of its properly ordered space, then it begins to define us, determine our values, and measure our self-worth as well as our relationship with others. As stewards, yes, we are managing finances, but we are also working not to allow our finances to manage us.

**A holistic stewarding of our finances reshapes our attitudes toward wealth and possessions; it also reframes our relationships with one another in the midst of the multiple economies in which we take part.**

*"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."* Attributed to Winston Churchill but probably penned years earlier, such wisdom relates to Christian stewardship. Far more than managing resources, stewardship is the way that disciples make a life, and giving yourself and your resources away is central to our formation within a life of faith.

Stewardship is more art than science. In ancient times, a steward walked the vineyard tending to the needs of individual grapevines or individual employees, knowing their needs were not the same. Cultures of financial stewardship must be tended in order to take root and grow.

On the other side of the production process, we might also gravitate to an image of a steward as a sommelier. Trained as a food and wine expert, sommeliers make sure their guests have a wonderful dining experience pairing wine that complements food selections and distinct palates. They too are stewards.

The power of money in our lives is too great to view stewardship as managing finances by simply moving money from one column to another. **Stewardship is rather tending our souls, aware of our unique fears and desires, nurturing our relationships with money as it marks a way of life and leading us to experience faithful living and the joy of giving.**