



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Bethlehem Pennsylvania

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Brothers and Sisters in Christ

In a study of scripture, Jesus spoke more of treasure (finances) than on the topics of prayer and faith combined. Over 2350 references were made on this subject in the Bible. We must ask ourselves *why* it was so emphasized. Are our finances more important than faith and prayer? Emphatically *no*, but Jesus knew they had a great potential to either arrest our spiritual growth or become a great springboard of faith.

The Whole Life Stewardship (WLS) Committee continually works to expand the understanding of Stewardship. It is a wide ranging concept that includes the giving of our time, talent, and treasure and the using of our remaining provisions in a way that glorifies God. *This document is not meant to diminish the importance of the other aspects of Stewardship or of our spiritual growth but to clarify our scriptural understanding of our financial responsibility to God.* This document is also not an effort to increase funds, but to bring us in line with scriptural teaching which is the pleasure and duty of all church leaders. The result *will* be an increase in funds for God's use, but that is a *secondary benefit* compared to the blessings offered to God's children when they act upon their love and trust.

The WLS Committee recognizes that we have not all had the same Christian education and experiences in our journeys to leadership. If this information is new to you, we are excited for the discoveries you will make as you live into God's teaching. If you have followed these precepts for a time, you know their value. Would you share your story with us?

Blessings to you all,

Elder and Chair, Whole Life Stewardship Committee

Pastor/Head of Staff

STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY†‡

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM

In response to God's love and ownership of all creation, to Jesus' call to follow Him, and to the power of the Holy Spirit to help us grow as disciples,

We, the Session (Ruling and Teaching Elders), Trustees, and Deacons:

- i. gladly commit ourselves to give generously of our financial resources as God directs through scripture and prayer; and
- ii. we strongly encourage the people of First Presbyterian Church to do the same.

In doing so:

- iii. we believe the biblical call to tithe (10%) our income is the benchmark of Christian stewardship; and
- iv. we shall *grow* toward giving our tithe to the Church, and giving generously beyond our tithe to the support of other Godly ministries and charities; and
- v. we shall carefully use our God-given financial resources remaining in our possession in a manner consistent with scripture and honoring to God.

We believe that:

- vi. there is joy to be found in putting God first as we share graciously what God has given us to manage;
- vii. there is freedom to be found in overcoming life's material distractions; and
- viii. there are blessings to be found in giving generously of our financial resources including the blessing of a deepening relationship with God based on increased trust and confidence as we see God's hand move in personal and unexpected ways;
- ix. the commitment of our financial resources to the work of the Church is one way we can help to keep the WORD of God alive, now and into the future.

† Scripture references to these statements can be found on the back with their corresponding numbers.

‡ Original statement approved by Session, December 1, 2003 and re-affirmed by Session June 6, 2005; updated for clarity and ultimate adoption 2010.

§ Capital 'C' references the larger church including and beyond First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem.

Scripture References

- i. 2 Cor 8:1-15, 2 Chron 24:10**
- ii. Titus 1:5-9, Sam 2:30**
- iii. Lev 27:30, Mal 3:8-11, Luke 11:42, Matt 5:17-18**— Direct support. This is also indirectly supported noting that the Pharisees accused Jesus of many infractions against the Law but could never accuse Him of neglecting His tithe.
- iv. Mark 12:40-44, Mark 10:17-27**—Jesus praised giving beyond the tithe and modeled it even to the giving of His own life. **Ex 35:29 and Ez 1:4-6**— Giving beyond the tithe [free will offerings] and support of other ministries and charities.
- v. 1 Tim 3**
- vi. Gen 4:4, Ex 23: 15-19, echoed in Prov 3:9, 2 Chron 31:5, 2 Cor 9:12-14, Luke 6:38**
- vii. 1 Tim 6:6-10**
- viii. Prov 11: 28, 2 Cor 9:6-1**
- ix. Matt28: 18-20 2, 2 Cor 9: 10-11, Gal 6:6**