

# Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

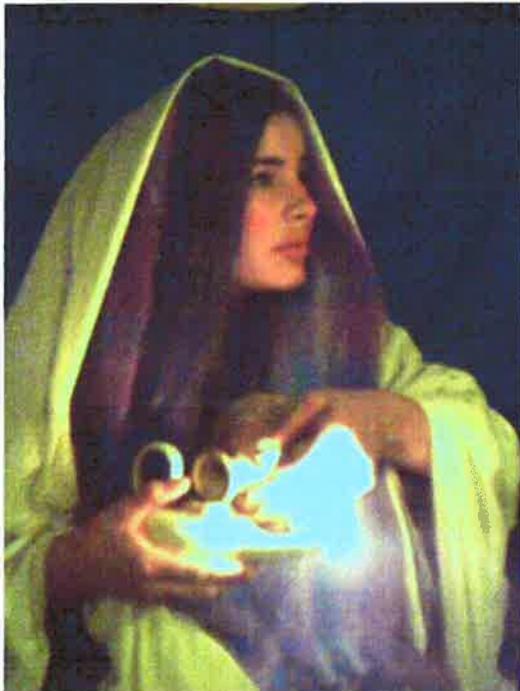
## A Stewardship Thought

When things start possessing us, God is moved to the periphery, and things we want to possess prohibit our spiritual growth. Matthew 6:21 says, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

How distressing it is to find that the things we earnestly pursued and believed we needed for our welfare, once attained, turned out to be the cause of growing emptiness.

## Testing your Knowledge of Scripture

Can you identify what parable the following person represents?



If you said the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), you were right. Jesus told a story of ten virgins who, according to the wedding customs of the day, prepared themselves for the arrival of the bridegroom. The ten girls were to accompany the bride with

their lamps to the house of the bridegroom's parents where the wedding would be held. Five of the virgins failed to plan for the possibility that the bridegroom would be delayed and didn't bring extra oil for their lamps. On the other hand, the five wise virgins were prepared with extra oil and were ready when the bridegroom arrived to take them to the celebration.

In the parable, the bridegroom is Jesus. In the coming of the bridegroom, Jesus is talking about his own return. The five foolish virgins are not referred to as being guilty of evil but of unfaithfulness in being prepared for his coming. The oil, which represents their faith, was missing. The wise girls are the faithful people who nurture God's gift of faith through Word and Sacrament.

Through the reading and studying of God's Word and through the participation in the Lord's Supper, we also prepare our minds and hearts for faithful stewardship.

## On the Lighter Side

A one-dollar bill met a twenty-dollar bill and said, "Hey, where have you been? I haven't seen you around here much."

The twenty answered, "I've been hanging out at the casinos, went on a cruise, and did the rounds on the ship. Then, for a while, I went back to the United States, went to a couple of baseball games, to the mall, that kind of stuff. How about you?"

The one dollar bill said, "You know, same old stuff ... church, church, church."

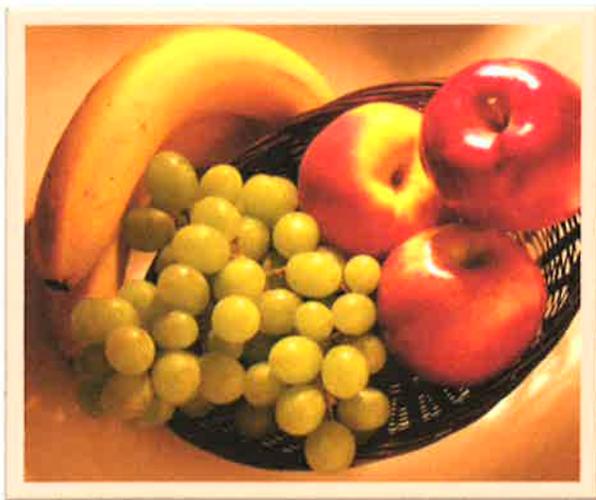
*We make a living by what we get;  
we make a life by what we give.*

## Living a Fruitful Life

*“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).*

Fruit characterizes the life of the Christian steward. It is interesting to note that, in the passage above, Jesus did not say, “You should bear fruit.” He stated that, when we abide in him, it follows naturally that we will bear fruit.

Paul explained to the Galatians what that fruit is: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.” “Since we live by the Spirit,” Paul exhorted, “let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (Galatians 5:25-26). As children of God, we have this fruit because his Spirit lives in us. We do not bear fruit as a result of our own efforts, but we do cease to bear fruit when we give in to our sinful



natures, becoming, in Paul’s words, “conceited, provoking and envying each other.”



Just as fruit needs light for its growth and maturation, so do Christians need to have their lives illumined by Christ. Then they are able to produce spiritual fruit and shed that light on the world around them. Ephesians 5:11 says, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness.” God calls us to “Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord” (verse 8).

We discover God’s will through his word and through prayer. As Paul prayed for the Colossians, we, too, can ask God “to fill [us] with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding . . . in order that [we] may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work . . .” (Colossians 1:9-10).

God has plans and uses for our lives. When we abide in Christ, we will be fruitful. We will discover and follow his plan, and we will use the gifts he has given us in ministry to the people of the world.

*Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!*