

# LIFE STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER



## STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

### How Much Would you Give Away if . . . ?

Let me ask you a provocative question, “How much would you give if you knew Jesus was coming back this time next year?” Please know that I don’t have any insider information by asking the question. But this question does open the door for us to honestly evaluate both our hearts and our motives regarding how we are living and giving. What if we could somehow know without a doubt that Jesus was indeed coming back in one more year? Would your level of giving change? This thought-provoking question ought to cause all of us to soberly pause and reflect on our answer. If our answer is, “Yes,” the amount of my giving would be higher; it might be good to ask yourself, “Why?” Why would the amount I would be willing to give over this next year be greater if I knew Jesus was coming back next year instead of twenty years or a hundred years from now?

I have identified three specific motivations for why I think all our giving would go up and most likely go up a lot! Let’s consider these three motivations.

#### **Motivation #1: “It’s Only a Year”**

If there was only one year left before His return, we might be much more willing to make meaningful, personal sacrifices since we now know that it would be only one short year before this world as we know it would come to an end? I think we would all agree that twelve months is a pretty modest amount of time to do without if we knew for sure it would only be for one year.

I know when I work out, I am able to endure much greater physical “torture” because I know that my workout is only going to last for one hour and then I can go back to my non-demanding, sedentary lifestyle. I am willing to incur a good bit of short-

term pain to hopefully enjoy a good bit of long-term gain.

If you are like me, you are probably far more willing to give something up for Lent (short term) than you are to give it up for life (long term). But what if you knew this life as we now know is only going to last for twelve more months? Would your willingness to part with even “essential” material possessions increase if there was only one year left to do without?

Ask yourself: “Would my giving increase over this next year if I knew with absolute certainty that Jesus was coming back and then the really good times were going to begin?”

#### **Motivation #2: “I’ve Got Nothing to Lose”**

Would our giving to the Lord increase because with only one year left, as the old hymn says, “the things

of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace?” As the new heavens and the new earth get closer, the grip this current world has on us would likely be loosened and its appeal and attractiveness would be greatly diminished.

Think about the value of a confederate dollar in 1861 (when the Civil War began) compared to the value of that very same dollar in March of 1865 (a month before the war ended), we would all agree that a confederate dollar after the confederacy fell was going to be worthless to whoever held it. So, if a person were to give away all their Confederate dollars just before the end of the confederacy, I think we would all agree, that person was not really making much of a sacrifice. Likewise, as the return of Christ continues to move closer, the “things of earth” will continue to grow more and more worthless because in that new day that is coming, nothing of our material possessions will be considered anything of value.

It is this fact that makes the picture of the streets in heaven being paved with gold so humorous. We take gold that is universally valued here on earth and in heaven God uses it for street pavement. The fact is that what the world values here is worthless there. And conversely, what the world considers worthless here is actually priceless there. Most of us don't have any trouble giving away what we consider to be worthless - junk.

Ask yourself: “Would my giving increase if I knew what I was giving away was in a very short time going to be worthless?”

### **Motivation #3: “It’s a Good Deal”**

I wonder if we might gladly substantially increase our giving if we realized that “investing” our resources in Kingdom initiatives just makes good financial sense. We could reason that doing so would enable us to enjoy not only a spectacular internal rate of return, but also a spectacular eternal rate of return in just one short year. Then, as we are ushered into the new heavens and the new earth, we will be rewarded handsomely for our sacrificial giving and our “brilliant timing.”

Randy Alcorn reminds of us of the obvious, “You can’t take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.” If we knew beyond a doubt that “ahead” would be only one year away (not decades or centuries), might we view the temporary postponement of our current enjoyment of and security in our material stuff a small trade off for the eternal gain that would very shortly be ours.

We have all read Matthew 6:20, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...” Jesus commands us to do this “for yourselves.” By knowing the time horizon for actually having our treasures returned to us makes “investing” in the Kingdom for ourselves all the more compelling. I think the appeal of a fantastic and guaranteed return on investment for almost all of us might be just too great to ignore.

Ask yourself: “Would my giving go up if I knew I was going to personally receive back a spectacular return on my Kingdom giving in just one year?”

Isn't it interesting how something changes in how we value our lives and our possessions when we use a shorter timeline? The world and our relationship to all our stuff are viewed quite differently. Life's real priorities quickly surface out of the clutter of our over-busy lives. Every single area of our lives will be quickly reshuffled and our life priorities reordered when the timeline is shortened. And what could be most unsettling about this list of newly identified life priorities is that they seldom include what currently consumes much of our daily lives.

In life, the tyranny of the urgent is constantly seeking to override the priority of the important. We seem to routinely make time for and overvalue what is really quite trivial and unimportant – often because we mistakenly believe that there will always be time for getting to the “big stuff” later. But, what if there was no “later”? What if there was only twelve months left?

If we only had one more year for Kingdom impact; only one more year to get the message that God has entrusted to us, His stewards, out; only one more year to give to make it happen; would we be living and giving differently than we are right now? I think so. And it might be a very valuable spiritual,

mental and emotional exercise to take some time to recalibrate and realign our priorities to focus on an eternal mission and not just a temporal one. Shorten your timeline and watch how it sharpens your focus.

We all need to plan like we are going to live forever and live like there is no tomorrow. If we choose to start living by this mantra, we will find some truly amazing changes in our lives starting to occur. Changes that may resemble a lot like how Jesus lived when He was here.

Obviously, no one knows if Jesus is going to actually come back next year. But I think we will all agree that regardless of when He actually does finally return, within the context of eternity, He will be coming back as the old gospel song says, “soon and very soon.” Are you ready to step up and start living and start giving like you really believe it?



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