

## Stewardship: A Way of Life Smoking or Nonsmoking!



**We are all going to live forever!** That question has been decided for us by Christ (John 3:16)! **The real question is will we enjoy it?** Do we as Christians understand the impact of this? Our life here on earth, this physical life is ephemeral. It lasts maybe 70, 80 or even 90 years. That sounds like a long time but compared to eternity it is just a pinpoint on a line that is infinite in length. That is how long we will continue to live after the second coming of Christ. So, as my Father, Charlie, used to say, will you be in the smoking or nonsmoking section?

I always thought that was quite funny until I realized, this is not a joke! Whether we sit in the smoking or nonsmoking section depends on how we approach our salvation. At the time of our baptism, God wipes the slate clean and bestows upon us many gifts. Unfortunately, most of us fall back into the life of sin from whence we came, and we never get to realize all those precious gifts Christ has bestowed upon us at baptism. "Egoism and self-centeredness prevent the gifts of God from manifesting themselves in our lives," states Archimandrite Zacharias in his book, *Christ, Our Way and Our Life*.

God bestows upon us gifts for specific reasons one of which is to help us to overcome the fall of Adam which caused man to break being in communion with God. God made man to "be in communion" with Him. That is our very purpose in life and the path to our eternal salvation. Archimandrite Zacharias states, "He (man) understands that the purpose of his coming into this life, the purpose of the existence of every soul, is to be with God, in Him, in His eternity." That gift that God gave Adam we now have to labor to obtain. God made us in His image, but we have to work at developing and maturing into His likeness which leads us, by His grace, to "being in communion" with Him. And, being in the image of God, since God knows Himself as persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in communion, we as His image must know ourselves to be in communion not only with Him but with each other. If we are not in communion with each other, we cannot be in communion with God. Why? Christ, who God the Father sent to show us the way back to "being in communion," gave us the new commandment to love not only God but our neighbors as Christ has loved them (John 13:34). The love He is referring to is a gift, the **kenotic love** that the Trinity shares. The same self-emptying love that means "being in communion."

So what does all this have to do with Stewardship? Everything! "Being in communion" means a participation, active involvement in the life of God, not just a relationship. A relationship you can take it or leave it but "being in communion" means that you share in the life of the one in which you are in communion. Are you sharing in God's life, the life that He has created you to live as His sons and daughters?

Further, are you “in communion” with each and every member of the body of Christ? Are you sharing the gifts that God has bestowed upon you with the body of Christ? God gave you those gifts to assist you in your journey to Theosis, total communion with God. He also gave you gifts to share with others in the body of Christ, to assist them on their journey. This mutual sharing of what God gifted us is the intent of the church. When you do not share what God has gifted you, you put others’ salvation in jeopardy as well as your salvation! I didn’t know that you say, well now you do!

The Stewardship Commission has stated over and over that “Stewardship is a Way of Life.” A subtitle could also read, “Stewardship is the Way to Salvation”—serious business. If you have not taken Stewardship seriously, you should start now. **Giving back** to God in proportion to what He has given you is not an option, **it is not an option!** You do have an option, a choice. God has given us as a gift free will. Free will is something that is an attribute of royalty. Kings and Queens had the attribute of free will. God has given us that gift because He wants us to be His sons and daughters in eternity. So here is your option; do you want to spend eternity in the countenance of God, **the nonsmoking section**, or forever outside the countenance of God, the **smoking section**.