



The Gift of Stewardship as the Mission of the Church

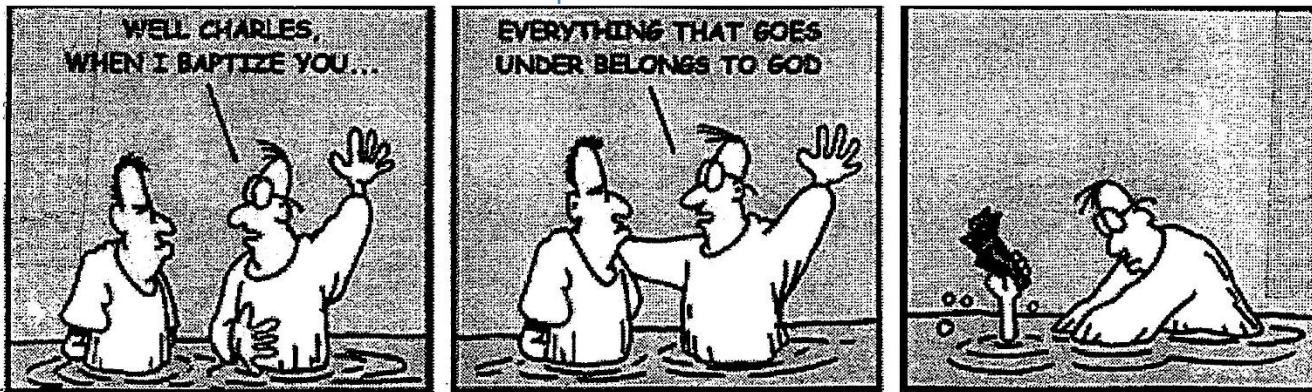
Daniel M. Bell, Jr.

Session 1: The Story of Stuff or Why We Have What We Have

- ▶ *Introduction: What is the Problem?*
 - ▶ Name the obstacles....
 - ▶ We have so much yet feel like we have so little.
 - ▶ Not about income, but vision, cultural norms, values, priorities, leadership, communication, institutional practices.

A. The Pathos of What Passes for Stewardship

- ▶ It is moralizing.
- ▶ It is economical.
- ▶ It is about buying.



B. The Story of Stuff: Why We Have What We Have

- ▶ ***Stewardship as a Story of Our Stuff and a Tiny, Bothersome God***
- ▶ ***The True Story of Stuff***

The story of a prodigally generous God, a God who wants more for us, better for us, than we could ever ask or imagine, a God who therefore calls us to be stewards, who sets us free in Christ to open our hands in generosity to others.

B. The Story of Stuff: Why We Have What We Have

- ▶ We give because we have already received everything we need.
- ▶ Stewardship is about what God gives in Christ.
 - ▶ What God wants us to do with what God gives us.
- ▶ God wants it *all* (and it is not really *our* stuff).

C. S. Lewis

“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc, is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them. . . . Particular cases of distress among your own relatives, friends, neighbours or employees, which God, as it were, forces upon your notice, may demand much more: even to the crippling and endangering of your own position.” (*Mere Christianity*, 86)

Church of England: “Let our superfluities [luxuries] give way to our neighbour’s conveniences; ... our conveniences, to our neighbour’s necessities; our necessities, to his extremities.”

B. The Story of Stuff: Why We Have What We Have

- ▶ Stewardship is about all our time.
- ▶ Stewardship is not about giving to the church.
- ▶ Key point: Discerning vocations as forms of stewardship.

► *The Universal Destination of
Material Goods*

John Chrysostom

“For our money is the Lord’s, however we may have gathered it. If we provide for those in need, we shall obtain great plenty. This is why God has allowed you to have more: not for you to waste on prostitutes, drink, or fancy food, expensive clothes, and all the other kinds of indolence, but for you to distribute to those in need. . . . [T]he rich man is a kind of steward of the money which is owed for distribution to the poor. He is directed to distribute it to his fellow servants who are in want. So if he spends more on himself than his need requires, he will pay the harshest penalty hereafter. For his own goods are not his own, but belong to his fellow servants. . . . For you have obtained more than others have, and you have received it, not to spend it on yourself, but to become a good steward for others as well.”
 (“On Wealth and Poverty,” II)

B. The
Story of
Stuff: Why
We Have
What We
Have

▶ *The Universal Destination of
Material Goods*

John Wesley

"Do you not know that God entrusted you with the money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind. How can you, how dare you, defraud your Lord by applying it to any other purpose?" ("Danger of Increasing Riches.")

B. The
Story of
Stuff: Why
We Have
What We
Have

▶ *The Universal Destination of Material Goods*

Thomas Aquinas

“Whatever certain people have in superabundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succoring the poor. For this reason Ambrose says . . . “It is the hungry man’s bread that you withhold, the naked man’s cloak that you store away, the money that you bury in the earth is the price of the poor man’s ransom and freedom.” . . . each one is entrusted with the stewardship of his own things, so that out of them he may come to the aid of those who are in need. Nevertheless, if the need be so manifest and urgent. . . then it is lawful for a man to succor his own need by means of another’s property, by taking it either openly or secretly: nor is this properly speaking theft or robbery.”

(Summa Theologica II.II.66.7)

B. The
Story of
Stuff: Why
We Have
What We
Have

▶ *The Universal Destination of Material Goods*

The labor of communion: The gifts of material resources are for the sake of nurturing communion, the sharing of all in the common good.

Important clarification: We do not *first* have abundance and *then* give it away or share it. Rather, abundance is found *in* giving, *in* sharing with and receiving from others.

B. The
Story of
Stuff: Why
We Have
What We
Have

C. Who We Are: Stewardship and Being

Martin Luther “A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body . . . but he lives also for all men on earth; rather he lives only for others and not for himself. . . . Therefore he should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may *serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and the advantage of his neighbor.* . . . This is what makes caring for the body a Christian work, that through its health and comfort we may be able to work, to acquire, and lay by funds with which to aid those who are in need.”

Eucharistic Liturgy of TUMC

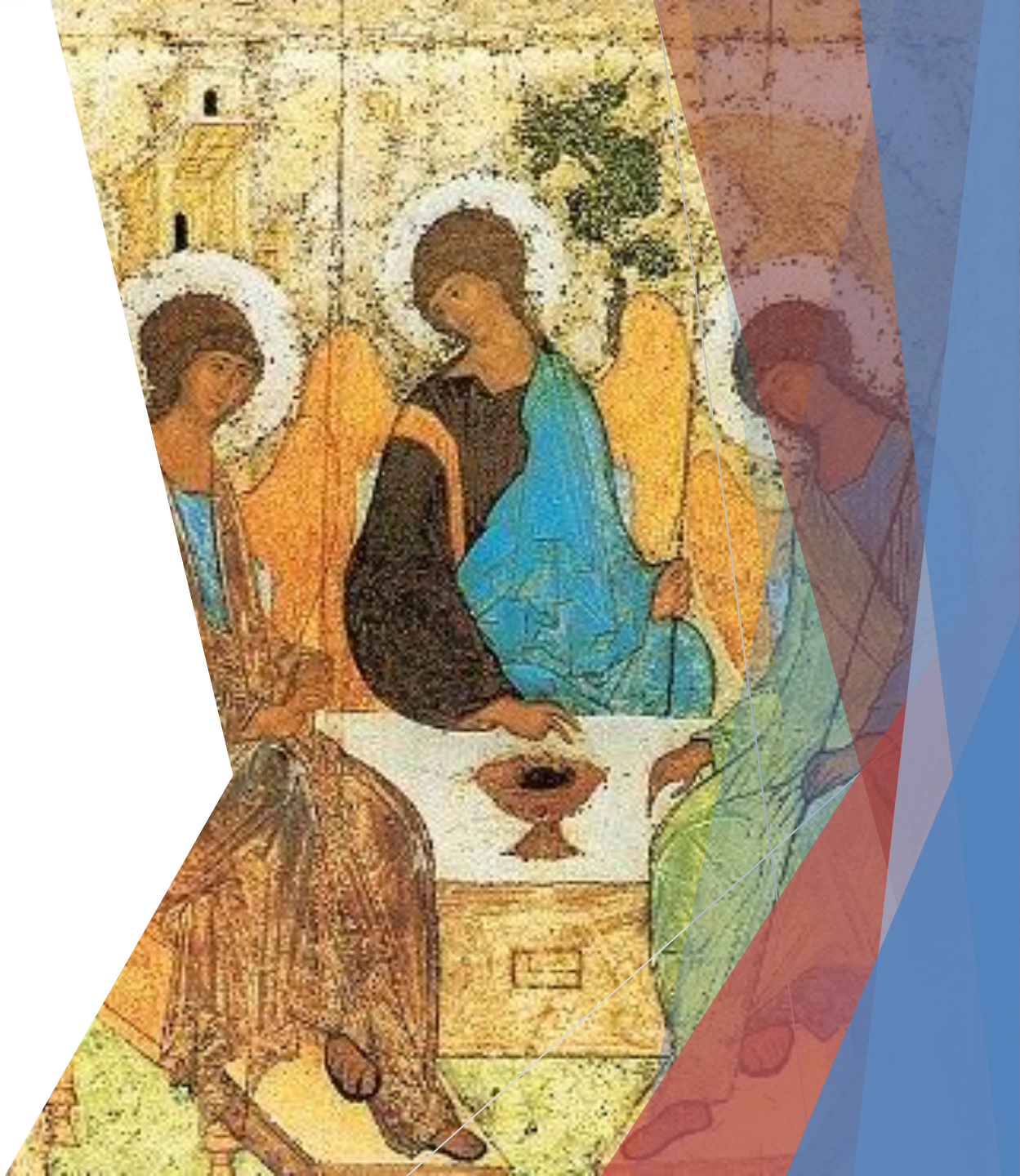
Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us.

Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others,

in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Conclusion

[John Tirro, "Use Me Up"](#)



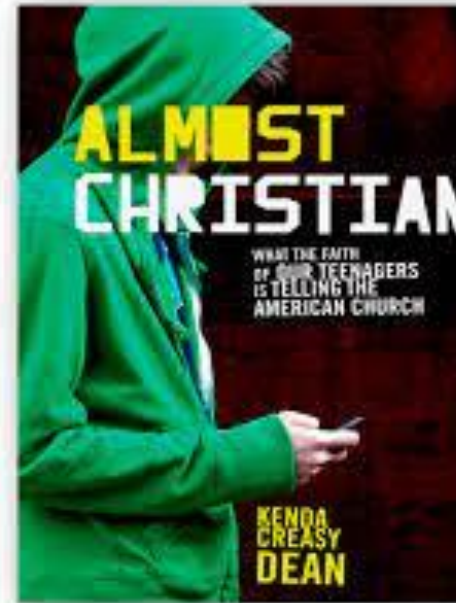
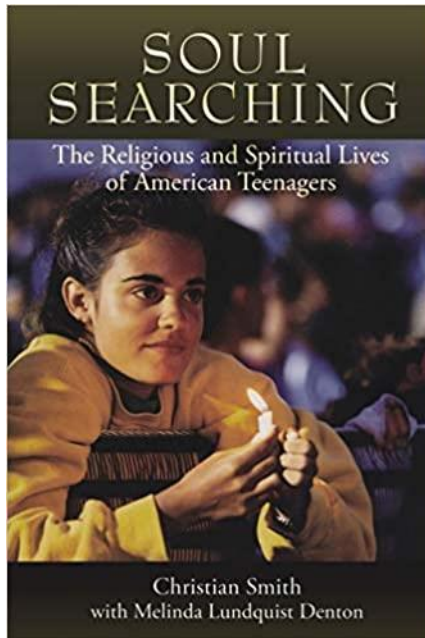
Session 2: Stewardship and/as the Mission of the Church

- ▶ *Introduction: Imagine No Campaign*

- ▶ Describe the church....

A. Stewardship and a Big Enough Mission

National Study of Youth and Religion





B. Our Edifice Complex

Ben Witherington

“It is time for western churches, especially those in North America, to rethink their edifice complex. Can it really be justified to spend millions and millions of dollars on elaborate buildings, which mainly serve only ourselves, and then struggle to raise money for mission budgets? The church is largely no longer a missionary movement. It is a self-nurturing entity which has a missions committee and budget but spends most of its money on itself. There is a difference between this and what one reads about in Paul’s letters.”

(Paul’s Letter to the Romans, 374)

C. From Going to Church to Being the Church to the Church Giving Itself Away



- ▶ Ecclesiality: Ecclesiology has to do not with Going to Church but with Being the Church.
- ▶ Church names what *all* Christians DO, 168 hours a week.
- ▶ Church is another name for the people of God on a mission.
- ▶ Stewardship is *not* about giving to the church but about the church giving itself away.

D. Leading the Church in Giving Itself Away

- ▶ Try This At Home
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Character
 - ▶ Personal
 - ▶ Congregational

D. Leading the Church in Giving Itself Away

- ▶ **Foster Theological Vision**
 - ▶ Don't plead; expand faith
 - ▶ Tell Better Story of Stuff & God
 - ▶ God wants to bless all of us abundantly...
 - ▶ Stewardship as Good News, a Gift.

D. Leading the Church in Giving Itself Away

- ▶ **Expand Practice of Discipleship**
 - ▶ Challenge Part-time Xy.
 - ▶ Xy as Better Way of Living
 - ▶ Challenge Privacy/Hiding
 - ▶ Encourage Vocations
 - ▶ Expand Generosity
 - ▶ Financial
 - ▶ Volunteering
 - ▶ Relational
 - ▶ Neighborly
 - ▶ Lending
 - ▶ Political Activism
 - ▶ Vocational....

D. Leading the Church in Giving Itself Away

- ▶ **Challenge Consumerism**
 - ▶ Lifestyle models? Norms? Goals?
 - ▶ Needs v Wants
 - ▶ Enough / Contentment

 - ▶ Objective Resource Constraints
 - ▶ Subjective Resource Constraints

- ▶ **Courage**

E. Stewardship and Race

- ▶ **Consumerist economy founded on white supremacy**
 - ▶ Race as means of exploitation.
- ▶ **Stewardship from white middle class p.o.v.**
 - ▶ Definition of generosity
 - ▶ Ignore *how* acquire
 - ▶ Stewardship is justice, not “charity.”

E. *Stewardship and Race*

- ▶ **Labor of Communion**
 - ▶ Don't know; don't believe; refuse to see
 - ▶ Metanoia / powers & principalities
 - ▶ Generosity as political activism / advocacy.
- ▶ **Stewardship is not white *noblesse oblige*.**
 - ▶ Need to *receive* the gift of others.
 - ▶ Break down barriers to receiving others.

Conclusion: **Best of
All God is with
Us**



Resources

Story of Stuff

- ▶ Justo Gonzalez, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money*
- ▶ Mark Allan Powell, *Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life*
- ▶ Christian Smith, Michael Emerson, *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money*
- ▶ Daniel M. Bell, Jr., "Stewardship and the Divine Gift Economy," *Criswell Theological Review* 11/2 (Spring 2014): 47-62.
- ▶ Daniel M. Bell, Jr, *Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World.*

Stewardship and a Big Enough Mission

- ▶ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (on NSYR)
- ▶ Chris Smith, with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*
- ▶ Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*
- ▶ Christian Smith & Hilary Davidson, *The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose.*
- ▶ Patricia Snell Herzog & Heather Price, *American Generosity: Who Gives and Why*

Leading the Church in Giving Itself Away

- ▶ Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving From Affluence to Generosity*
- ▶ Richard Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*
- ▶ James Halteman, *The Clashing Worlds of Economics and Faith*
- ▶ Alan Roxburgh & Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*
- ▶ Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church*
- ▶ Daniel Goleman, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*
- ▶ Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*
- ▶ Peter Steinke, ----
- ▶ Ira Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up to and for Our Leaders*
- ▶ Robert Kelley, *The Power of Followership*
- ▶ Simon Sinek, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*
- ▶ Ronald Heifetz & Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*
- ▶ R Heifetz, A . Grashow, M. Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*
- ▶ James Kouzes & Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*
- ▶ John Maxwell, *The 360 Degree Leader*
- ▶ Patrick Lencioni, ---
- ▶ Robert Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*
- ▶ Robert Lupton, *Toxic Charity*
- ▶ John Perkins, *Beyond Charity*