

March 2007

My struggle with "Stewardship"

**By Pastor John Keller**

I struggle with the word "stewardship." My struggle has both a cultural and personal dimension. The cultural is easier to address than the personal dimension. Yet it is the personal dimension that I wrestle with the most.

First, even though stewardship has a rich, Biblical history, in our contemporary church culture it simply means, "to give money to the church." Mention stewardship to most church members and they think of offering envelopes, pledges and pleas for money. Giving money to the church is not a bad thing, but money remains something that most of us highly value and we only give when we have a good reason.

The Biblical meaning of stewardship gives me a good reason. "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it," Psalm 24:1. The Bible challenges my cultural assumption that I own what I have and that I am free to use it as I will. The Bible states that all, including myself, belongs to God. He is the owner and I am only given temporary oversight. I am called by God to be a steward, an overseer, a manager of God's property, including my family, my home, my job, and my money. Just like Adam and Eve in the first story of Genesis, I am placed on this earth to till and keep it, but not to own it.

This is where my second struggle enters. Like Adam in the garden of Eden, I like to be in charge, or at least have the illusion that I am in charge. This illusion includes my family, my home, my job and my money. I want to control my life. Yet when I take an honest look at my life, I realize that I am making a mess of it. Like the alcoholic who is convinced that he is in control even when everyone else see that it is the alcohol that controls his life, I am addicted to my control illusion, particularly when it comes to money.

It is only when I realize that I am addicted and confess my inability to own and control my life, that I realize that God is the true owner of my soul, my family, my job, and my money. In Jesus' death and resurrection, God has reclaimed me as his own. God knows the big picture. He knows what I need and provides for me in all ways. Daily I struggle to turn my life and all its complexities over to God. As I turn it over to him, I ask God to make me a responsible steward or manager of his resources. In this way all of my life is seen as stewardship. For example, I don't own my family but rather I am placed as a guardian or steward over them for a time. And part, but only part, of responsible stewardship is giving to God's work through my congregation. My financial contribution to the congregation is my faith statement that God is the true owner of my life.

I still struggle with living this out every day. I am beginning to like the word stewardship, but only as it challenges me to let God be God in every aspect of my life.

---

## **Will New Trans Fat Rules Impact Financial Habits?**

***From Nathan Dungan, president and founder of Share Save Spend™ and his web site [www.sharesavespend.com](http://www.sharesavespend.com)***

Did you know that New York City recently instituted new rules eliminating the use of trans fats from all restaurants?

I am guessing it hit the fast-food industry like a ton of bricks.

And to make matters even worse -- or better depending on your perspective -- the city's Board of Health is also requiring fast-food restaurants to post the calories in their offerings in large type and in readily visible positions. Probably not the best way to increase sales of the bacon double-cheeseburger.

Imagine if similar rules were instituted for over-the-top spending? Hang with me while I lay out the scenario.

You're standing in line at your favorite store and the clerk starts ringing up your purchases. When it's time to process your credit card, only part of the transaction is approved. Why? There are too many "wants" -- i.e. trans fats -- in the cart that you can't afford -- a kitchen gadget, clothes, tools, shoes, trinkets for the house, etc.

To make matters worse, you're persistently late in paying your credit card bill and as a result it's dragging down your credit score. The high interest rate on your card means more money to meet the minimum payments, and as a result too few contributions to your retirement plan and your child's college fund.

A chart next to the register explains the time value of money in big, bold print. That is -- how a small amount of money invested at regular intervals today can grow to large amounts in the future.

There is a reason that Einstein said, "The most powerful force in the universe is compound interest."

The parallels between unhealthy eating habits and unhealthy financial habits are startling. Last year the federal government admitted there is a direct link between junk-food advertising directed at children and childhood obesity. I'm still waiting for their report that states the 3,000 daily advertising impressions also impacts a child's -- and most adults -- financial habits.