



# LEGACY 20/20

*Celebrating Our Past and Securing Our Future: Souls, Sites, Stewardship and Succession*

## **DAY 21- THE ANATOMY OF A CHRISTIAN STEWARD**

### **A Life that Loves**

*Mark 12:30*

Toward the end of W.C. Fields' life - in fact, while he lay on his deathbed, a friend stopped by to see him and was rather surprised to find him reading the Bible. As you probably know; W.C. Fields was a lot like the rascally, drunken character he often portrayed. The friend asked, "Why in the world are you reading the Bible?" Are you looking for answers?" W.C. Fields said, "No. I'm looking for loopholes."

When we read the words of Jesus, we sometimes catch ourselves looking for loopholes. He made some hard statements. For example, when asked about the greatest commandment He replied: "You shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). This leaves no loopholes.

Jesus used one word in Luke 6:38 to describe how we are to live up to the beatitudes. He said, "GIVE and it shall be given unto you..." No loopholes.

If we were honest, one of the most difficult words for us to follow is His command, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 13:34). If He had just said, "Love one another," we could try to water it down. But the clause "as I have loved you" makes it absolutely clear what Jesus meant. He then said, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

How can God command and expect such love from us? The answer is simple - Because He first loved us.

I heard about a young girl whose mother was reading the third chapter of John to her. Pausing after verse 16, the mother exclaimed, "Don't you think that verse is amazing, dear?" The child thought and then said, "No." The mother thought the youngster must have misunderstood, so she repeated the question. But again the



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girl shook her head, saying, “No. It would be amazing if it were anyone else, Mother. But it’s really just like God!”

It is His nature, for “God is love.” He has demonstrated it in so many ways. He gave His Son! He forgave our sins! He provides for our needs. He gave us His church. He gave us hope for eternity.

As Annie Johnson Flint has written:

His love has no limit; His grace has no measure;  
His power has no boundaries known unto men.  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!

In writing to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul repeatedly said that our giving was proof of our love (II Corinthians 8, 9). It was as if he is saying to us today:

Do you love God? Let your giving prove it.  
Do you love your church? Let your giving prove it.  
Do you love the fellowship? Let your giving prove it.  
Do you love the lost? Let your giving prove it.  
Do you love the hungry and hurting? Let your giving prove it.

Let me share with you the struggle one Christian went through in coming to the point of complete surrender that love demands. Her name is Mary Crowley, the founder of Home Interiors and Gifts, Inc. She started it as a small door-to-door business and built it into a billion dollar business. In her book, Think Mink, she shares her testimony. At the time of her sharing this story was a financially strapped single parent struggling with her church commitment.

*“There was just no way that I could tithe. Sitting at the kitchen table after the children were asleep, I figured up the stack of bills, my budget for groceries, rent and housekeeper expenses, the bus fare for going to work and to church on Sundays and Wednesdays. If I added 10 percent of my salary to the debit side of my budget, there would be nothing at all left in the miscellaneous column – no money for Christmas presents, books for the kids, or the dentist. Oh, why did children have to have cavities? ‘Lord, You see how it is,’ I prayed. ‘I want to tithe, but I don’t have enough to take care of the kids as it is.’ The answer, as answers to prayer often are, was not what I expected. ‘Well, Mary,’ it seemed God was saying to me, ‘it looks as though you’re not*



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*doing such a hot job of providing for the kids by yourself. Why don't you give me a chance?' Why not? But I was no dummy in mathematics. I had made good grades in my night accounting class. I knew exactly how much money was in my paycheck from the insurance company where I processed premiums and claims all day. I had memorized fixed expenses. There were always unexpected things such as dentist bills coming along, too. 'Lord, You know I haven't enough,' I argued. 'Don't you trust Me, Mary?' God asked. 'Well, yes, but ...' I was literally pacing the floor that night wrestling with an angel. By the time I signed my name on the pledge card for exactly 10 percent of my salary, the clock had already struck midnight and I was exhausted. But somehow it was a great relief. I didn't know how God was going to do more with nine-tenths of my salary than I could do with ten-tenths, but somehow I felt He was going to do it."*

She proceeds to tell how God "did it". He continued to bless until her name was known worldwide. Her love for her Lord and her faithful giving to her church and His causes are legendary.

Love always finds a way to give, for love is not love until it gives. John Oxenham so graphically depicts love with this poem:

Love ever gives – Forgives – Outlives  
And ever stands with open hands.  
And while it lives, it gives,  
For this is love's prerogative –  
To give – and give – and give.

**The question: Do you love Jesus?**

**Lord, it is my prerogative and privilege to give and I will give because I love you more than anything.**