

## Abolishing The Three “t’s” of Stewardship



We have all heard of the three “t’s” often used to define stewardship--Time, Talent, and Treasure. I have never been a big fan of these “t’s” and propose we eliminate them from future discussions about what it means to be a steward of God’s abundance.

“What does she have against the three ‘t’s’?” you might be asking yourself. Let me make my case.

First, why does treasure come last in the sequence? I realize this may not have been intended as an ordered list, but I think subconsciously we may read it that way. In my personal and professional experience, treasure is not only the most difficult, but ultimately the most important part of the stewardship journey. I have heard pastors and stewardship people lament, “the last place where conversion occurs is in someone’s wallet.” This is true! Many people will volunteer, serve the church using their vocational and/or avocational skills, but contribute very little financially. Giving away money is scary--once you give it away, it is difficult (and typically awkward) to get it back. It is much less disconcerting to offer your time or talent as these “banks” seem to be replenishable.

Second, because so many people hear “time, talent OR treasure” rather than AND. It is these selective listeners who often say, “Well, she is already giving so much of her time...we can't ask her to give her money too.” Recently I was meeting with a very large church located in one of the most affluent communities in the country whose median annual gift was a miserly \$500, which calculates to about .3% of the average household income in their neighborhood. As the members wrapped their heads around this, one person commented, “Well, we had over 200 people serve

the homeless last week. People are giving their time.” As if that is sufficient. Jesus does not say we are off the hook financially regardless of what else we might be doing in terms of time and talent. When asked what is needed for him to inherit eternal life, Jesus tells the Rich Young Ruler, “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Mark 10:21 NIV)

The way I see it, “follow me” includes more than what most people tend to put in the silos of Time and Talent. For me it includes, heart, mind, body, relationships, etc. etc. Jesus wants all of us, everyday, all day, for all eternity. It is time to abolish the three “t’s”! Who’s with me?

Kristine Miller

[Horizonsstewardship.com](http://Horizonsstewardship.com)