

advancing stewardship

estate planning and other news



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Planning for Retirement or Vacation? What is given priority ?

Is planning for retirement a stewardship priority?

In the CSS vision statement "Living responsibly in God's world", we indicate that we believe that being responsible with the resources entrusted to us by God is an all encompassing concept. We need to be responsible about our use of resources - including money - both now and in the future. Responsible financial planning is not about hoarding. It is about accepting that until the Lord returns we need to manage resources prudently for future needs.

Some people fail to plan for retirement because they have not learned to manage their resources effectively. This is certainly an issue, which needs to be dealt with. The proof that this a problem for many is in the statistics, which show an ever, increasing debt level for Canadian families and a quantum leap in a number of bankruptcies being declared.

What are we to do?

Perhaps one of the **first** things we need to do is accept the reality that we spend more time planning for a vacation each year (which may last 2-4 weeks) than we do planning for retirement. The life expectancy of a female age 63 is 23.7 years and a male age 65 is 18.6 years. That's 1/4 to 1/3 of a lifetime! Making provision for such a long period needs to be a priority.

The biblical story of Joseph and the Egyptians presents an interesting picture. Pharaoh decided that Joseph was a very wise man when he interpreted the dreams and advocated what needed to be done about the future. Like the Egyptians it is important to recognize the need to **START EARLY**, the effect that time has on accumulation of resources is often far more significant than interest rates or the amount of money set aside.

Where do we start? Accept that this responsibility is a part of your stewardship. It is a responsibility not an option. This commitment is step one. Next you need to allocate as much planning and resources each year to

retirement planning as you do to vacation planning. When you do this you will make a large dent in what needs to be done.

Some of the same concepts that we use in vacation planning can also be adapted to retirement planning. When planning vacations you do research - read brochures and gather information. You ask for recommendations and advice from experts. When planning for retirement, start with the principal that you will set aside a portion of what you have received for the work of the Lord, then set aside an additional portion for future needs. That would be a good start. Next, select advisors who approach the subject with values that are similar to your own. Check out their references!

- No one would hire an employee without doing reference checks.
- Can you determine what their track record is? How long have they been in the business?
- Does the planner really get to know the client or just completes the mandatory asset checklist?
- Do they show realistic expectations based on your needs and goals?
- Do they stay in touch - in good times as well as bad?
- Ask about their approach to balance in your portfolio, what are their thoughts about "growth" and "value" investing. What are their attitudes about risk and return? Does the advisor use "trade jargon"? An advisor who uses terminology that is unclear is not acceptable.
- A trusted adviser will be a valuable ally in developing your plan. You will agree on things like; objectives, desired asset mix, any personal investment constraints, monitoring expectations, disclosure of fees and expenses, review and reporting expectations.

Low interest rates on GICs, bonds, and other fixed income investments, combined with the effect of inflation and taxes, are encouraging movement back into the mutual funds and equity markets. Be sure that you choose a knowledgeable trustworthy coach.

Remember that the outcome of this partnership will determine YOUR retirement lifestyle.

Genius for generosity

A guide to smart giving.

Did you know that there are more than 180,000 registered Canadian charities and nonprofit organizations and that this number grows daily? Between church offerings, solicitations arriving by mail and canvassers coming to your door the possibilities to support charitable work seem endless.

But how do you decide which are worthy of support?

It can help to think of your donation as an investment. You wouldn't buy a mutual fund or start a new business without researching it first. So, before you get your chequebook out, make a list of the charities you are considering and check *them* out. Here are three easy steps:

1. Put your money where your heart is!

Invest in something that's close to you. It's important to have emotional ties to the organizations or charitable work you support, otherwise your donation might feel rather empty. About half the charitable gifts made in Canada are given to the church - because people have a strong connection to the work that goes on there.

Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better. Giving directly to local groups can be a lot more satisfying than putting your money into large but relatively faceless organizations. Why? Because you can see real results of the work local groups do, right in your own backyard.

2. Check their references.

Here's the scenario: a sympathetic-sounding canvasser convinces you to donate to his charity. Months pass with no sign of a tax receipt. Then the realization hits: you've been taken! Rip-offs like this are easy to avoid. To make sure the organization is legitimate, check its brochures for a nine-digit business number (every registered charity has one). Then call the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (1-877-202-5111, or log on to <http://www.cra-adrc.gc.ca/tax/charities/list-e.html>) and find out whether the charity is still in good standing.

If you want to ensure a charity will use your money responsibly, have a look at its financial statements. As a donor, you are entitled to receive copies of the charity's annual reports, the names of its board members and a clear statement of how it intends to use donations. You don't have to be an accounting whiz to figure out how well the organization is doing - just look for the part of the statement where operating expenses are broken down. This figure should not exceed 20% of the charity's total revenue.

I think this is a worthwhile exercise - not all charities are created equal. Give to organizations which provide the most ministry work for your donation dollar.

Many Christian charities in Canada are members of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities. These organizations will display the "4C's" symbol on their letterhead or receipts, letting you know that they have met strict financial and ethical standards in their operating procedures.

If you've already donated to a charity that doesn't meet this criterion, it's not too late to do a little damage control. Your power to incite change lies in the promise of future gifts. A charity would rather set things right with you than risk alienating someone they hope will become a regular supporter.

If you're really unhappy, ask for your money back. If you think you've been a victim of fraud, please do others a favour and report the organization to the Better Business Bureau and your local police. Don't be too embarrassed to save others from the same mistake!

3. Plan your strategy.

While spontaneous giving isn't exactly a no-no, it is important to set a dollar amount that fits your budget, and stick to it. I know Christians who tithe 10% of their income, according to the Bible's direction on giving God the firstfruits. Others I know give less, but in a purposeful, intentional way. Listing your tithe as the first line item in your budget is a very responsible approach and one, I feel you will be blessed by.

You'll maximize the effectiveness of your gifts by making a few significant donations, instead of many small gifts. More of your money will go toward youth ministry, cancer research, world hunger, or whatever cause you've chosen to support. Choosing a special project for your charitable gifts for a year - or number of years will also provide you with a more intimate and meaningful experience. Find things that interest you or affect you personally and stick with them for a time. You'll be glad you did.

Make sure your donation pays for more than paperwork. If you send \$20 off to every charity that sends you a piece of direct mail, it often costs more than the value of your donation to solicit and receipt you.

After your gift, make sure you stay informed. Read newsletters and visit websites. Stay connected with what you accomplish through your giving!

Have you taken the time to plan your giving for this year? If not, I challenge you to do so - you'll be glad you did.

Is a CSS Deposit Agreement Right for You?

A CSS Deposit Agreement is a combination of investment and planned gift. It is especially designed for donors who wish to put their money to work effectively, to benefit themselves and a favourite charity. Deposits are invested by CSS and pay a rate of return between 0 and 4 percent. Any earnings over and above those paid to you are gifted to charities of your choosing.

You retain ownership of your deposit and can have it returned upon 30, 60, or 90 days notice. Your deposit is invested primarily to enable Christian organizations meet their capital needs through mortgages and loans.

Some donors elect to gift their deposit outright to the charities they have supported at death - avoiding probate and other fees. Other donors choose to have it returned to their estate.

The minimum amount to establish a CSS deposit agreement is \$5,000. CSS deducts a modest administration fee before distributions to charity to cover expenses.

Is a CSS Deposit Agreement right for you? Contact Henry Eygenraam at Christian Stewardship Services for more information on how you can participate.

advancing stewardship

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visit CSS on the web:

[WWW.CSSSERVICES.CA](http://www.cssservices.ca)

Stewardship: Start With Vision

Rick DeGraaf

There's a song that we've sung numerous times in my church that goes:

"We want to see, we want to see Jesus lifted high, A banner that flies across this land, That all men might see the truth and know, He is the way to Heaven."



That song is a vision statement and of course points to the day when the work of the church is finally complete – and Jesus returns.

Setting a vision statement for your church, your institution or business or even your team is important and helps everyone to work together in the same direction. For instance, at CSS our vision statement in its briefest form is **"Living responsibly in God's World"**. Using the words of the song, we at CSS want to see all God's people living responsibly in God's world. For us it means that we utilize all the resources that God has entrusted us in keeping with His will.

A vision statement can seem lofty – so unreachable or never fully attainable – yet it serves us well by setting the direction or that overarching goal that we are striving for. All the efforts, our programs, strategies and objectives should align with our vision statement. For us it means that all of our activities, our presentations, the group meetings we facilitate, the individual consulting visits we do and other interventions are directed by this vision: to help you "live responsibly in God's World."

A vision statement is not a 'mission statement'. At CSS, our mission statement reads as follows: **"CSS, together with its supporting Christian organizations, promotes biblical stewardship through planned giving and education."** It says what we do and even the broad sense of how. The vision statement simply says where we hope to go. A vision statement should be brief and easy to memorize. It needs to capture what it is you want to see happen but in a few words.

It is our hope that your 'vision' casting will help you in your strategic planning process. And if by encouraging to do so, it's part of our commitment to you – to help you "Live responsibly in God's World".

Here we Grow Again!

Christian Stewardship Services

is seeking:

- Regional Field Representatives -

to enhance our level of service across Canada

WANTED

Have you seen someone fitting the following description?



- * Exceptional interpersonal, organizational & communication skills
- * Group presentation & facilitation abilities
- * Energetic and highly self-motivated
- * Passion for helping people live responsibly in God's world
- * Understanding of estate & financial planning - planned giving concepts

CAUTION!

*This person may be in your church, school, home or **mirror!!!***

If you've seen this person or are looking for a personal REWARDing part-time opportunity, turn your suspect or yourself in, to:

Christian Stewardship Services

Ray Elgersma, Search Committee

(519) 578-2508 or rayelgersma@sympatico.ca

A full position description and application package are available upon request



Request for Information:

mail or fax to:

Christian Stewardship Services 600 Alden Road, Suite 315 Markham, Ontario L3R 0E7 Fax: (905) 947-9263

Please provide the following:

- | | |
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