

Feb 28 “Conscientious Stewardship” (Stewardship) Exodus 36:2-7

**The Context** of our scripture today from Exodus 36:2-7 is God’s redemptive act of bring the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, and the giving of the “Mosaic Covenant” to the people through Moses.

**Exodus 34:10-14** *Then the Lord said: "I am making a **covenant** with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you. **Obey** what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Be careful not to make a **treaty** with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not **worship** any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

A “**Covenant**” is an agreement. Some covenants are “top-down” (king to citizen; boss to employee) while others are among equals (the covenant of marriage). Certain privileges are granted to each. However, certain conditions exist for each as well. In the Mosaic covenant God promises to do incredible wonders (vs. 10; 11b). The “Mosaic Covenant” reflects **God’s initiative**. God is the one who recruited their leader, Moses, who rescued the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, who gave them the 10 Commandments, and who provides them with a homeland.

However, the **people** have a response to God’s initiative. It is contingent upon **their obedience** (vs. 11a). They are to do certain things (keep the Sabbath holy) and not do other things (make treaties with the “ites” and worship their gods - v12-14). The people have committed a grievous sin (the “Golden Calf”) while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the commandments. This doesn’t go over well with God (or with Moses, for that matter). Then we get a glimpse into the fact that God is a “jealous” God. (This is the verse that turned Oprah away from Christianity – even though it’s an Old Testament text. Oprah interprets it as jealous rage & volatility, which can lead to stalking & abuse.).

Why is God a jealous God? Jealousy is seldom considered to be a virtue. It seems rooted in insecurity and immaturity. It’s the sense of “I want what you have. And I hate you that you have something that I don’t have.” But there’s another type of jealousy, which would be best understood within the marital relationship. If my wife had affections for another man and I wasn’t concerned about that then something would be wrong with my understanding of our relationship. If I didn’t have such a feeling something would be wrong. She said as much when we were married: “**and forsaking all others be faithful to him as long as you both shall live.**” This type of jealousy is not immature at all, but protects the sanctity of our commitment to one another. It’s very exclusive. We don’t have an “Open Marriage.” On February 14, we honored 217 Golden Anniversary couples. I can guarantee you that they’ve all had marital problems in their years together, some more serious than others, but few people who practice an “Open Marriage” will stay together for 50 years.

The command is to make a Tent of Meeting. It was time to have a place to worship God. They were a wandering people without a permanent home. They did not have a Temple. They were instructed to make a big tent which would serve as the central place to worship God. It was to be called “The Tabernacle.”

I remember Bill Mason saying that someone suggested that when we were on our old property on Sheridan that instead of going to all the expense of adding on to the old sanctuary, that we should just put up a big tent on the grounds. Bill said: “That would not work well in the cold of Jan-Feb. or the heat of July-August. You want your place of worship to look nice and to be nice. You want it to be a sacred spot. That will mean different things to different people. But for these nomads a Tent would be a perfect expression of their life on the go. They weren’t going to make a permanent home in the Wilderness – they were exiting from Egypt into an entrance into the Promised Land. But until they got to that sacred site, and they could build a Temple, they were going to need a temporary structure. It would take hundreds of years before the Temple was built, so they were supposed to make their Tent of Meeting a sacred place in its own right. It had gold, silver and bronze. It meant beautiful and costly colors and fabric. It was not going to look cheap. It was going to be the best they could bring.

Moses:

35:4 Recognized God's authority: "This is what the Lord has commanded:

**35:5** Then he asked the people for an **offering**. *Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering*  
v10 *All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the Lord has commanded:*

He invited the "Good Hands People" to share their skills. **Volunteers** of all types of vocations were invited. Men and women, young and old. Sharing your talents, as well as your gifts.

*:21 everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments.*

*v23 All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the Lord.*

*v26 and all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair.*

*v29 All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the Lord freewill offerings for all the work the Lord through Moses had commanded them to do.*

Many times they are commanded to do certain things. There was no command that one HAD to give. It was based upon the willing heart. Their offering was to be based upon gratitude. They had been delivered from a terrible life of affliction in Egypt. Now they had a brand new life, and a wonderful future lay before them. They had the opportunity of a lifetime – to contribute something to their place of worship. There was no fear, guilt, or coercion of any kind. It was just a matter of "everyone who is willing" – you understand how important this is and what a great opportunity you have to impact people for hundreds of years.

**36:2-7** *Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the Lord had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work. 3 They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. 4 So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done." 6 Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, 7 because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.*

How often have you heard people say, "Okay...that's enough. Quit giving. We've got more than we can handle?" How did this happen? **What are the dynamics of abundance?**

1.) People **believe in the mission**. They were delivered from bondage from Pharaoh, seen miracles, but had also regressed & worshiped the golden calf. They were grateful for their forgiveness & given hope. Their gifts were given to God for the building of the Tent of Meeting; but the real motivation = they were giving to God.

**What would happen if American Christians REALLY believed in the mission...and thus gave? We would change the world.**

**Relief:** Clean Water, Medical supplies, help Poor & not just w. handouts, but like Habitat for Humanity;

**Rehabilitation:** Programs like Celebrate Recovery; Christian counseling; and Prison Ministry

**Development;** Christian Colleges & Seminaries financed; Missionaries deployed; Bible Translations, Church Buildings all over the world would be completed; Christian Radio, TV, & Movies produced; Student Workers on college campuses and within churches; PH.D students would earn their degrees and go teach in all types of settings, etc.

2.) People have **something to contribute**. Some had more than others. Some brought big gifts. Some couldn't bring a lot to the table, but they could work with their hands. They gave of their time, talents, and treasures.

3.) People **were asked**.

They had a need – to build the Tent of Meeting. Moses asked the people to respond. They did. Let me ask you: TITHE. If you can't begin at 10%, then simply begin somewhere. Make a positive move in that direction. Let me ask ALL of you: children, youth, or adult.

Our Mission statement = “**Glorify God.**” In particular, there are two ways we show which side we're on in our culture: How we use our **BODIES/MONEY**. Either we please God or we please ourselves.

Our Mission statement = “**Make Disciples**” That means we know what Jesus has asked; and that we do it. Doing it means Going. It also means Sending.

The key (redundant) phrase = “*all who were willing.*” Are you willing?