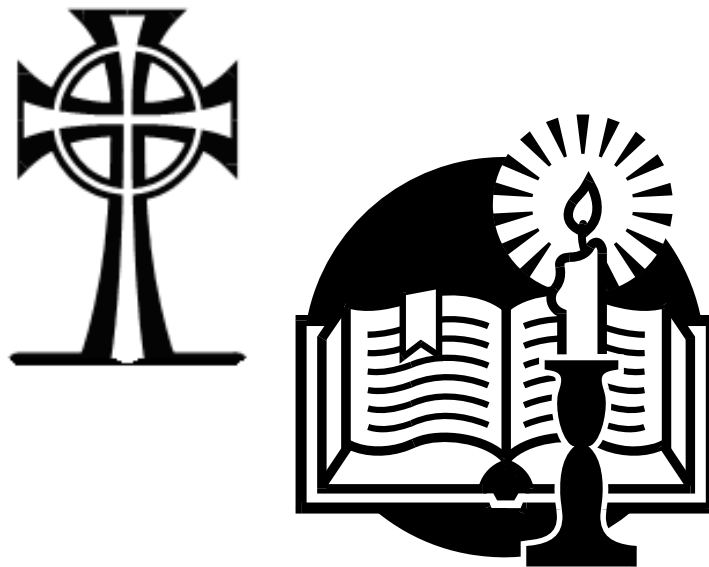


Lenten Devotional

Stewardship Principles



As baptized members of the body of Christ, we gratefully confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. We boldly proclaim the gospel as the Word of God. We clearly recognize the gifts that God has first given us through grace, and we joyfully accept our role and responsibility as stewards.

The following principles provide a foundation for the life of a faithful and generous steward.

We walk together as stewards in God's church.¹

¹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, © 2006
Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, © 1989,
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

Lenten Devotional – Stewardship Principles

How to use:

Bible: During Lent, daily read the scripture lessons from the daily lectionary.

Pray: Use the prayer to continue the devotional.

Read: The focal verse, a centering point for the devotional.

Principle: Review the Stewardship Principle (box at upper right hand page edge).

Reflection: Read and think about how the reflection connects to the Bible verses, in particular the focal verse and Stewardship Principle.

This Lenten Devotional follows the appointed daily lectionary readings. These readings are connected to the 10 Stewardship Principles that come from the Apostle Paul’s writing to the church in Corinth.

A reflection is provided to enhance exploring the meaning for these Bible verses and the Stewardship Principle. As you read the reflection, consider how the Bible verses (in particular the focal verse) connect with the Stewardship Principle for the day.

What do you hear?
How does it make you feel?
Toward what are you being drawn?
What do you sense you should do?

Questions for Reflection

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

Looking up Bible references:

If you find Bible references confusing, you’re not alone. Begin with a Bible reference, such as Matthew 28:19-20. It can be divided into its parts. Book: Matthew, chapter: 28, and verses: 19 through 20. These comprise the three main parts (book, chapter, verse) for a Bible reference.

Find the book, Matthew, in the Bible index in the front. Matthew is the first book in the New Testament. Then find chapter 28 (chapter numbers are larger, often bold type), in Matthew. It’s the last chapter. In chapter 28 go to verse 19 (verse numbers are smaller, usually set above the line as superscript). This is the beginning for the reference: Matthew 28:19-20. The 19-20 indicates reading from verse 19 through verse 20. [Note: *alphabetic after verse numbers indicate which sentence: a, b, c = 1st, 2nd, 3rd sentence.*]

Wednesday, February 22: Ash Wednesday

Readings: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Prayer: *Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen*²

1

Respond gratefully
to what God has first given us. All that we do is a response to God’s grace. Everything we are, have, and use comes from God. Best of all, God gives the gift of Jesus Christ and the community of believers. It all begins with God. Our confession of faith in Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior is not of our doing. Grateful stewards put God first.

“... but they gave themselves first to the Lord.”
2 Corinthians 8:5

Focal Verse: “Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.” *Joel 2:12-13*

Reflection: Do you really believe that God will provide for you and your family’s need?

God is generous, giving, loving, forgiving, and gracious. God desires our loving response to His generosity. God’s generosity can be seen most clearly in retrospect. Examine your life. Search to see God’s generous hand in it. Take out a pad of paper and write down the times in your life or in the lives of others close to you when God’s hand has been present.

What do you hear?
How does it make you feel?
Toward what are you being drawn?
What do you sense you should do?

Now think of some times when your congregation has stepped out in faith and God has been there. Jot down these times

Stewardship is thanksgiving; giving thanks for all that God has given us – our time, our abilities, and our money. Stewardship is the way we manage *all* our time, abilities, and money.

Our stewardship is our decision as to how we live and manage our entire life. What we return to God through the church is only a part of our stewardship. We are given by God the freedom to manage all our time, abilities, and money. That process of management is called stewardship.³

² Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Augsburg Fortress.

³ Cloughen, Jr., Rev. Charles, “One Minute Stewardship Sermons”, 1997, Morehouse Publishing, p. 2-3.

2

Obey responsibly

to glorify God as a faithful proclamation of God’s word. We acknowledge our faith and show our faith in the gospel for the glory of God and for the building up of the body of Christ. This takes courage. It involves our life-long obedience, including the ways we treat our families, others, and ourselves.

“... you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ.”
2 Corinthians 9:13

Thursday, February 23

Readings: Psalm 25:1-10
Daniel 9:1-14
1 John 1:3-10

Prayer: O Lord, great and awesome God, be with us, showing your steadfast love toward us. Empower us to trust your word contained in the commandments and in so doing to live your commandments always. In Jesus name. Amen

Focal Verse: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” *1 John 1:8-9*

Reflection: Trustworthiness – faithful dependability – is the mark of the excellent steward.

Christ-centered stewardship is the by-product of a Christ-like attitude.

So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” **Mark 10:42-45**

At the most basic level, the true steward is a true servant.

Faithful dependability as a Christian steward relates to the management of money, but also to a great deal more. The “portfolio” for which we are responsible includes a wide range of components, and God’s expectation is that we make the most of each one. Think of all the “assets” you have under management: your money, your time, your possessions, your opportunities, your influence, your relationships and much more.

- To be a trustworthy steward, you must handle the small things with the same regard as the big things.
- To be a trustworthy steward, you must see everything in life as sacred.
- Don’t keep the secret things of God; share them liberally.⁴

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

⁴ Sutherland, Dave and Nowery, Kirk, *The 33 Laws of Stewardship*, NewSource Publishing, © 2003, p. 39-43.

Friday, February 24
Readings: Psalm 25:1-10
Daniel 9:15-25a
2 Timothy 4:1-5

3

Sacrifice proportionately

as Christ sacrificed for us. For our sake Jesus gave up everything to make us rich through the cross and the resurrection. We are called to sacrifice so others may share in God’s word and blessings.

“... gave according to their means, and even beyond their means.”
2 Corinthians 8:3

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you show us grace and mercy beyond reason. As we respond to the gifts we have received may our actions be acceptable. For our giving reflects what you have first given us. Through these actions may others see you and give you glory. In Jesus name. Amen

Focal Verse: “I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.” *1 Timothy 4:1b-2*

Reflection: **Why We Give**

Understanding what the Bible says about financial generosity can help us achieve a balanced plan for our giving.

The faith practice of regular offerings to your congregation is grounded in a “first fruits” biblical principle (1 Corinthians 16:2). Your offerings express your thankful response to God’s gracious presence in your life.

Proportionate Giving

Proportionate giving, or tithing, includes all undesignated giving to your congregation.

Many ELCA members refer to this kind of giving as their Sunday or weekly offering. “Undesignated” means that you support your congregation’s leadership in their decisions to allocate these funds.

About 90 percent of this giving stays in your congregation. This helps ensure that the ministry of the word flourishes in your community through local outreach and ministries.

Your congregation then shares a small portion of your offering, called mission support, with your synod and the churchwide organization. This financial commitment makes possible God’s work through ELCA synodical and churchwide ministries in this country, the Caribbean and around the world.

Our financial generosity is an expression of our love for God, for our neighbor and for ourselves. We are new people in Christ: compassionate and eager to share.⁵

What do you hear?
How does it make you feel?
Toward what are you being drawn?
What do you sense you should do?

⁵ <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Stories-of-Faith-in-Action/Explore-the-Stories/Why-We-Give.aspx>

4

Give willingly

as moved by the Holy Spirit. We have been prepared to give ourselves. We give our time, talents, and resources freely.

“For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave ...”
2 Corinthians 8:3

Saturday, February 25

Readings: Psalm 25:1-10
Psalm 32
Matthew 9:2-13

Prayer: *Almighty God, all that we possess is from your loving hand. Give us grace that we may honor you with all we own, always remembering the account we must one day give to Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*⁶

Focal Verse: “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees. *Psalm 25:4-5, 10*

Reflection:

Food Production and Distribution	Problem
The earth is able to produce enough food for everyone to have their nutritional needs met.	1.02 billion people are hungry in the world.
Food production and distribution accounts for one-fifth of the oil consumption in the United States. Oil is used to produce fertilizer, pesticides, and packaging; it is also used for planting, harvesting, shipping, and cooling. Food travels on average 1,500 miles from field to plate.	Human activity, specifically through the burning of fossil fuels, exacerbates climate change. Climate change affects rainfall patterns, which in turn limits the abilities of farmers, especially subsistence farmers, to grow food.
Poorer areas of the United States, both rural and urban, are less likely to have access to affordable and nutritious food. Those who are poor are more likely to live in a “food desert” where their only option for food is a convenience store or fast food restaurant.	Obesity and other health problems related to diet (such as Type II Diabetes) are more likely in poorer communities.
In the United States, food is often centrally processed and then shipped across the country and across the world.	If one batch of food is contaminated ...it is quickly and widely distributed. ⁷

What do you hear?
How does it make you feel?
Toward what are you being drawn?
What do you sense you should do?

⁶ LBW, p. 44.

⁷ ELCA Hunger Education Toolkit