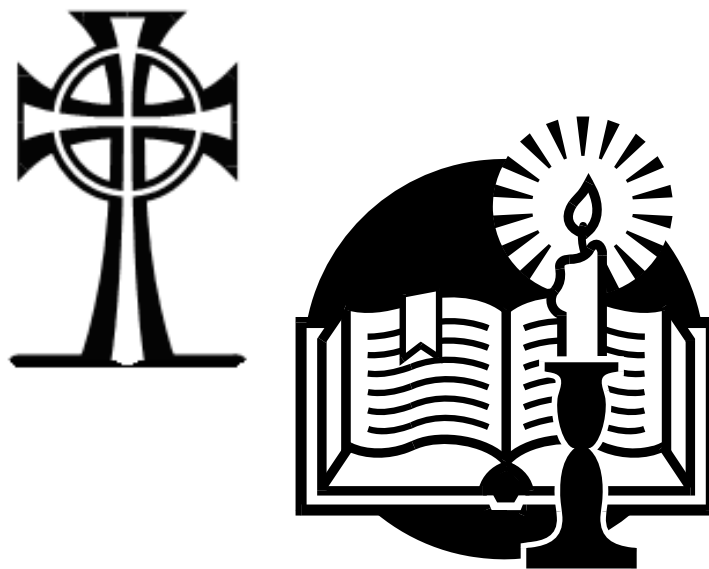


# Lenten Devotional

## *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.***<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 = 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence.*]

Sunday, February 26: ***First Sunday in Lent***

Readings: Genesis 9:8-17

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

Prayer: *Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us 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.*<sup>8</sup>

Focal Verse: “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.” *Psalm 25:10*

Reflection: ... a theological focus on stewardship is clearly appropriate during the season of Lent.

During the season of Lent it is appropriate for each believer to examine her or his faithfulness to attributes that define God. We say that God offers providence, which verbalizes simply that God takes care of us. Jesus puts this concept in the form of a question: “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” *Matthew 6:26*

Psalm 25 at its heart addresses the one who prays out of a sense of sinfulness and need for forgiveness. The one who prays asks that God steer his or her life: “Lead me in your truth, and teach me.” But the petitioner also suggests even more by way of confession: “For you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.” The promise to wait is in itself revealing. The one who prays offers persistence and endurance as a means to obtain what God alone can deliver. Persistence and endurance also reveal earnestness. Jesus’ parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-5) praises a woman who received justice only because of her dogged resolve. Likewise, the psalmist promises to wait “as long as it takes.”

For stewards, Psalm 25 offers several divine attributes that conceivably those who give and serve faithfully might mimic. Among those divine traits offered by the psalm, we read about God’s mercy, truthfulness, steadfast love, and faithfulness. When the psalmist prays to God, “Teach me your paths,” he asks for a portion of the essence of what makes God what God is for us. Later in the incarnation, Jesus becomes the character of the Godhead – divine traits assuming human flesh. Christ, consequently, answers Psalm 25’s prayer. To learn of God means that stewards assume God’s traits with the faithful intention to share those Godlike traits with the world.<sup>9</sup>

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

<sup>8</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Augsburg Fortress

<sup>9</sup> Mosser, David, Stewardship Services, ©2007 Abingdon Press, p. 106-7.

Monday, February 27  
 Readings: Psalm 77  
 Job 4:1-21  
 Ephesians 2:1-10

5

**Share abundantly**

as we have received. The purpose of these gifts is for the good of the community of God. We give to build up the body of Christ. We use and share our gifts for the benefit of all.

**“... and God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”**  
 2 Corinthians 8:3

Prayer: *Open our hearts, O Lord, and enlighten our minds by the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that we may seek what is well-pleasing to thy will; and so order our doings after thy commandments, that we may be found meet to enter into thine unending joys; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*<sup>10</sup>

Focal Verse: “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—“  
*Ephesians 2:4-5*

Reflection:

We need to give and we need to give gladly. What else does Scripture have to say on the subject?

*On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come* (1 Corinthians 16:2).

The faith practice of making a regular financial offering to your congregation is grounded in a “first fruits” biblical principle. Your generosity is ... part of your day-in-and-day-out joyful response as a child of God.

Offerings refer to giving that is above and beyond, and never in place of, your commitment to regular congregational giving ...

*Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroy* (Luke 12:33).

Alms are our compassionate, heartfelt response to the people Jesus mentioned in Matthew 25: those “least” of our sisters and brothers who are “less” than we in circumstance only and always our equal in their humanity. Your outreach makes God’s love for them feel very real and very immediate; your kindness reveals Christ’s presence within them as well.<sup>11</sup>

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

<sup>10</sup> Bede (The Venerable), For All the Saints, © 1995, American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> ELCA, Stories of Faith in Action – 2010, p. 7.

Tuesday, February 28  
 Readings: Psalm 77  
 Job 5:8-27  
 1 Peter 3:8-18a

6

**Give proportionately**

is our way of giving in relation to our abundance. We are to give according to our “means,” not according to an income or a budget.

“If the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has – not according to what one does not have.”  
 2 Corinthians 8:12

Prayer: *God of wisdom and love, source of all good, send your Spirit to teach us your truth and guide our actions in your way to peace. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*<sup>12</sup>

Focal Verse: “As for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause. He does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.”  
*Job 5:8-9*

Reflection: **The Law of Proportionate Participation**

Jesus said that the poor would be with us always, and He declared that the priority, regardless of one’s lot in life, is to glorify God and trust Him explicitly. Whatever the situation, whatever the limitations, we are to worship and serve the Lord wholeheartedly. Just as Jesus loved without limits and gave without restriction, so are we to love and give in proportion to His provision for us.

[Paul] wrote to the Corinthians: “*And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.* 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 NIV

The young churches of Macedonia were persecuted severely and were materially poor, yet spiritually they lived above the extreme conditions and excelled in giving it their all. Specifically, they gave to a ministry project that the Apostle Paul had initiated; and they gave in a most remarkable way: sacrificially, beyond their ability, willingly and eagerly – of themselves to God and of their resources to God’s work.

The Law of Proportionate Provision ... teaches us that *God’s provision dictates the believer’s proportion*. In other words, what He provides determines what we give.<sup>13</sup>

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

<sup>12</sup> The Roman Missal © 1973, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc.

<sup>13</sup> Sutherland, Dave and Nowery, Kirk, *The 33 Laws of Stewardship*, NewSource Publishing, © 2003, p. 91-94.

Wednesday, February 29

Readings: Psalm 77

Proverbs 30:1-9

Matthew 4:1-11

7

**Commit intentionally**

means making a statement about your intent and following through. As members in the body of Christ, we are asked to make a commitment of our time, talents, and resources as a faithful response to God and as a statement of support for God's work.

**"... arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised."**  
2 Corinthians 9:5

Prayer: *Almighty and merciful God, in your goodness keep us, we pray, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready both in mind and body, may accomplish with free hearts those things which belong to your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen*<sup>14</sup>

Focal Verse: "You are the God who works wonders; you have displayed your might among the peoples. With your strong arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. *Psalm 77:14-15*

Reflection:

Each one of us must choose and keep choosing the master we will serve – God or wealth (mammon). In *The Challenge of the Discipline Life*, Richard Foster deals with the power of *mammon* – money. It is not neutral; it has power to control and corrupt the creatures of God. He states:

What all this talk about stewardship fails to see is that money is not just a neutral medium of exchange but a "power" with a life of its own. And very often it is a "power" that is demonic in character. As long as we think of money in impersonal terms alone, no moral problems exist aside from the proper use of it. But when we begin to take seriously the Biblical perspective that money is animated and energized by "powers" then our relationship to money is filled with moral consequences (page 24).

Our relationship to money is what concerns God. Whom do we worship? What do we worship?<sup>15</sup>

Money has incredible power to do good or evil. We believe that the power can be harnessed for good – to fulfill Jesus' mission.

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

<sup>14</sup> Book of Common Prayer, © 1977.

<sup>15</sup> Cloughen, Jr., Rev. Charles, "One Minute Stewardship Sermons", 1997, Morehouse Publishing, p. 9, 15.

Thursday, March 1

Readings: Psalm 22:23-31

Genesis 15:1-6, 12-18

Romans 3:21-31

8

**Contribute  
regularly**

means practicing our stewardship on a daily basis. By doing so this becomes a lifestyle. Paul instructs us:

**“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn.”  
1 Corinthians 16:2**

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you remind us that “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35) You have given us the greatest gift, everlasting life in your kingdom. You invite us to participate in your kingdom now as we experience the joy of giving. In all we do, may we be joyful and regular in our giving as we are a blessing to others. Amen.*

Focal Verse: “From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever! *Psalm 22:25-26*

Reflection:

St. Paul speaks of two motivations for giving our selves, our time and our possessions to God’s work. In 2 Corinthians 8:9, he appeals to the model and example of Jesus and asks us to give as Jesus did. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, he reminds us that God promises to richly supply all that is needed for us to continue to give.

The model of Jesus and the promise of God’s provision motivate us to be generous.

Our generosity honors God, the source of all generosity. Our generosity makes God’s purposes known. By God’s power, our generosity provides the announcement of the Good News of salvation and the deeds of mercy, the actions of love, which serve the needs of people everywhere.

Our generosity draws us closer to God, the Giver of all good gifts. Generous deeds shape our lives and our understandings. Through generosity we begin to know more deeply and more broadly the graciousness of God. Generosity does not change God’s behavior toward us, but it changes our behavior toward God.<sup>16</sup>

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

<sup>16</sup> Meier, Michael, Step by Step, © 2001,ELCA, p. 1.

Friday, March 2  
 Readings: Psalm 22:23-31  
 Genesis 16:1-6  
 Romans 4:1-12

9

**Live genuinely**

means putting your faith into action. This is the tangible demonstration of what is sincerely on our hearts and where our treasure is, not simply a verbal expression. The Macadonians set an example that Paul called to the attention of the Corinthians.

**“I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others.”**  
 2 Corinthians 8:8

**Prayer:** *O Lord, giver of every good gift, help us take to heart Jesus’ words when he commanded the leaders of the synagogue: “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:21) Make us mindful that all that we are and all we have, we place at your disposal. May these gifts be gifts that scatter the good news like seed into the world. Make us those who plant the seeds of joy and mercy in all the places we go and bless our gifts that this might be so. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen*<sup>17</sup>

**Focal Verse:** “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness” **Romans 4:3-5.**

**Reflection: God’s Work through Our Hands**<sup>18</sup>

God’s love sets us free to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Not because we need to earn our salvation, but because everything we do is a response to all that we have been given.

Just as our work on behalf of our neighbor is a reflection of our gratitude to God, our financial giving is also a “thank you” to the gift of Jesus in our lives.

Through the work of our hands across the globe and through the generosity of our hands in our weekly offerings, we share God’s boundless love with the world together.

*Marked with the cross of Christ forever,  
 we are claimed,  
 gathered and  
 sent  
 for the sake of the world.*

Mission statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

<sup>17</sup> Mosser, David, Stewardship Services, ©2007 Abingdon Press, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Stories of Faith in Action 2011, ELCA p. 30.

Saturday, March 3

Readings: Psalm 22:23-31

Genesis 16:7-15

Mark 8:27-30

Prayer: Lord, help me to imitate your joyfulness in my own life. Sometimes it is difficult to discern the difference between those things you want me to enjoy as your good gifts and those things I should set aside as self-indulgent or excessive. I ask for the wisdom to see that difference – to celebrate as you celebrated and to live simply in the spirit of the way you lived simply.<sup>19</sup> In Jesus name. Amen

10

**Accept  
a challenge**

means recognizing the dynamic nature of our faith. As our faith grows so will our blessings, and our responsibilities. Paul writes,

**“... the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”**  
2 Corinthians 9:6

Focal Verse: “Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.” *Psalm 22:30-31*

Reflection: *The Law of Single-minded Service*

There’s no question that money has an alluring power, tempting us with all that it can purchase or accomplish. If we give into it, we learn to our dismay that it has the power to control us and make us its servant. Jesus taught His disciples, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” (*Luke 16:13 NIV*)

In Jesus’ teaching, the term “money” has a very broad meaning. It includes actual money, but it also includes everything which we can become attached in this material world – all the things that money can buy.

One of the most important principles of Christian stewardship is the Law of Single-minded Service. When we use the term *single-minded* it’s obvious what we mean: having a single focus, a single interest, a single purpose.

Single-minded service requires ... self-denial, the setting aside of personal wants. Single-minded service also requires sacrifice. Single-minded service requires perseverance as well

Single-mindedness demands constant spiritual discipline. Living by this precept is not easy, but it is rewarding.<sup>20</sup>

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

<sup>19</sup> NIV Stewardship Study Bible, Stewardship Council, 2009, p. 1329.

<sup>20</sup> Sutherland, Dave and Nowery, Kirk, *The 33 Laws of Stewardship*, NewSource Publishing, © 2003, p. 197-200.