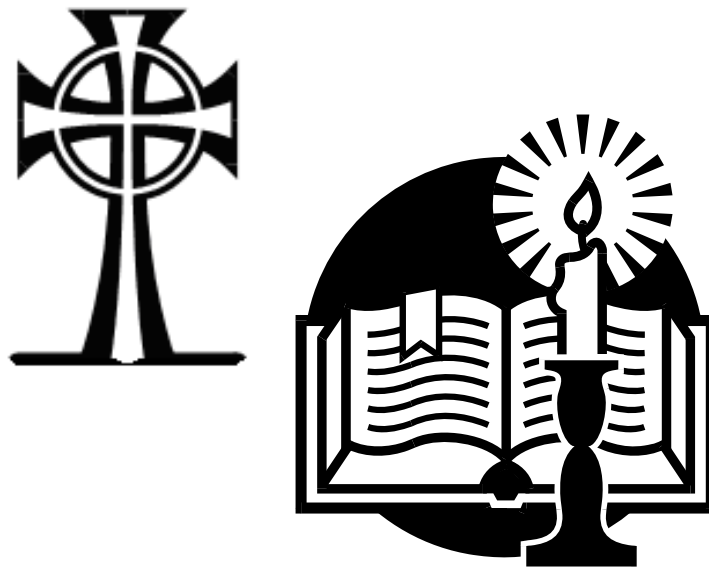


Lenten Devotional

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.*]

Sunday, March 4: **Second Sunday in Lent**

Readings: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38 *or* Mark 9:2-9

Prayer: *O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world 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.*²¹

Focal Verse: “For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?”
Mark 8:36

Reflection:

During Lent the church examines itself, measuring faithfulness against the life and teachings of Jesus. It is often easy enough for aspiring disciples to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, yet the proof of discipleship is in the follow-up to the confession. For stewards, what we do with what we have after we make our confession of faith is a litmus test of our stewardship – or how we manage the households God call us to manage.

... Jesus begins to define what those who truly follow him will face.

It is obvious on its face that stewards must first make a confession about who Jesus is. Yet stewardship does more than merely manage a confession. Stewardship assumes the responsibility of living the faith by managing the households of gifts and graces God has loaned us. Thus, what we do with what we have is a “second step” toward full discipleship.²²

What do you
hear?

How does it
make you
feel?

Toward what
are you
being
drawn?

What do you
sense you
should do?

²¹ Evangelical Lutheran Worship.

²² Mosser, David, Stewardship Services, ©2007 Abingdon Press, p. 108-9.

Monday, March 5

Readings: Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45

Genesis 21:1-7

Hebrews 1:8-12

Prayer: *Merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature. Make us always thankful for your living providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*²³

Focal Verse: “O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.”

Psalm 105:1-2

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

Reflection: Generosity is the natural consequence of abundance.

The most effective way to break the power of money is to give it away – to give it away generously, to give it away in a manner that the world would describe as reckless.

The goal of our stewardship ministry is to help God’s people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents, and finances God has entrusted to them.

There are certain characteristics that the Bible lifts up when it talks about giving.

These following six characteristics could easily be seen as the values of a steward.

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

Intentional: Being intentional in one’s giving means to develop a plan for your giving and then follow through with that plan.

Regular: Regular giving ... means to establish a pattern in your giving, and to follow that pattern.

Generous: Generous giving is perhaps the most basic stewardship value. God’s incredible generosity is the basis for any call for generous giving on the part of God people. We can’t out give God.

First: First-fruit giving ... means giving to God first and living off the rest.

Proportional: The Bible always calls us to percentage giving.

Cheerful: Cheerful giving ... comes from 2 Corinthians 9:7; “God loves a cheerful giver.” The key to being a cheerful giver is to practice the other stewardship values.²⁴

²³ Evangelical Lutheran Worship

²⁴ Charles Lane, Ask, Thank, Tell, © 2006, Augsburg Fortress, p. 42-53.

Tuesday, March 6

Readings: Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45

Genesis 22:1-19

Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-19

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

Prayer: *O God, you teach in the Holy Scripture that we are to care for those who have little and are poor. Remind us that as we give our offering that we are contributing to those who are the least, the lost, and the last. Daily may we remember the words of Jesus, who taught us, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40) Help us remember just how much we truly have.²⁵ In Jesus name, Amen.*

Focal Verse: “The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.” **Genesis 22:15-17a**

Reflection: Stewardship is growing, developing, advancing, and building the gifts with which God has blessed us. God supplies resources sufficient to the mission.

... live in the confidence that:

- The love of God is renewing
- The power of God is astonishing
- The grace of God is amazing
- The purpose of God is moving
- The hope of God is overcomes all.

God invites us to be a good steward of the gift of generosity. A good steward returns all to the master. As you return all to God, you are freed from thinking you own what you have been given. God invites you to be a steward of the gift of God’s mission.

As stewards of God’s mission, it is never quite clear who is helping whom. God gives us first the mission, and then God gives us the congregation – the outpost, the mission team – with which to be in mission with the unchurched.

When you are a good steward of the congregation with which God has blessed you, you help that congregation toward wellness, to grow beyond a sense of powerlessness, a sense of compulsiveness for perfectionism, a sense of low self-esteem, a sense of depression or dependency, a sense of codependency.

You advance the congregation toward healing and wellness. As you do so, you act as a good steward of God’s mission.²⁶

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

²⁵ Mosser, David, Stewardship Services, © 2007, Abingdon Press, p. 62.

²⁶ Callahan, Kenneth L., Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church, HarperSanFrancisco, © 1992, p. 115-124.

Wednesday, March 7

Readings: Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45

Jeremiah 30:12-22

John 12:36-43

Stewardship Principle

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: *Gracious Lord, you have blessed us with abundance. From your bounty you have given us all that we need and even more. Open our hearts to make available what you have given us so that all will have enough this day. In Jesus name. Amen.*

Focal Verse: For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the Lord! **Psalm 105:42-45**

Reflection:

Christian stewardship begins with God's giving. A person cannot be a Christian giver until he or she first becomes a receiver, until he or she receives God's gift. As Christian stewards, we are God's trustees who are chosen to take care of all that is important to God.

The Christian steward ... is one who cultivates an intimate relationship with God. It is a relationship of prayer, Bible study, spiritual growth, constancy in worship, service to the community, and giving.

Yes, Christian stewardship begins with God's love, but it goes on to affirm God's ownership. ... that all we have is God's. A friend once designed an overhead slide for me to use in seminars. It shows a hearse with a rental truck on the back. How much of what we have is really ours?

Tithing is not about giving 10 percent; it is about who we are, whose we are, and what we are doing with all of it – all 100 percent. Christian stewardship begins with God's love, affirms God's ownership, and then celebrates God's partnership.

Stewardship understands that everyone is in a partnership with God, a partnership in which God provides the gifts for ministry. ... God's invitation to be in partnership, provide a clue of what life is about for each individual.²⁷

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

²⁷ Joiner, Donald W., Creating a Climate for Giving, © 2001, Discipleship Resources, p.30-33.

Thursday, March 8

Readings: Psalm 19
Exodus 19:1-9a
1 Peter 2:4-10

Prayer: *Heavenly Father you direct all that we do. Following your word, we ask, search and knock trusting in your sure and certain promise that whatever is done in your name, consistent with your will comes to fruition through your grace. In Jesus name. Amen*

Focal Verse: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” **1 Peter 2:9**

Stewardship Principle

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

Reflection: When practiced consistently and intentionally, giving can become a spiritual discipline and, even more, a sacred art. When we practice giving regularly and understand that our motivation has some connection outside of ourselves, we have the opportunity to radically transform our lives, the life of another person, even the lives of entire communities.

Creating a lifestyle of generosity will allow you to do good in this world. Your giving will have a ripple effect; it will be passed on to other people, other families, other communities, other generations. Your giving will change the world.

When we create a *lifestyle* of giving, not just participating in a whirlwind of giving one weekend and then dropping the practice, our lives can become continuously filled with the blessings that come from this spiritual practice. Creating a lifestyle of generosity is more than just behavioral modifications; it is seeing the world differently every day. Taking small, consistent steps now is far better than waiting until the “right time.”²⁸

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

²⁸ Giving - The Sacred Art: Creating a Lifestyle of Generosity, Lauren Tyler Wright, 2008, SkyLight Paths, p. ix-x, xxii-xxiii.

Friday, March 9

Stewardship Principle

Readings: Psalm 19
Exodus 19:9b-15
Acts 7:30-40

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: *Lord God, you give to us in abundance desiring that we use your good gifts to benefit all people. Empower us to respond in faith in all that we do so that our actions bring glory to your holy name. Amen.*

Focal Verse: The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. **Psalm 19**

Reflection: Do we ask ourselves whether the way we use our money and the laws and rules we create to arrange our economy truly bend toward justice for the poor and needy of our world? Are we content to continue believing that current arrangements which so obviously benefit those of us who are most well off, will at some point – somehow – begin to work for the most needy as well?

Proverbs recognizes that those who seek wisdom’s way of justice will be concerned not only with the protection of the poor, but also with the well-being of other socially marginalized people.

If a king judges the poor with equity,
his throne will be established forever. (Proverbs 29:14)

The sages note that political leaders who ensure justice for the poor exercise legitimate dominion. A leader’s rule is legitimate only insofar as the leader establishes and maintains social justice. A king is responsible for providing justice to those who seek it. When political rulers promote and ensure genuine social justice, they align themselves with the divine will.

Besides the calls to show kindness to the poor and vulnerable people in our midst and the claim that a society’s political leaders have a responsibility to maintain social justice in their realms ... proverbs speak of every person’s responsibility to act in a way that is fair, honest, and just when it comes to basic economic activity.²⁹

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

²⁹ Money and the Way of Wisdom: Insights from the Book of Proverbs, Timothy J. Sandoval, PhD, 2008, SkyLight Paths, p.91, 95, 96, 97, 99.

Saturday, March 10

Stewardship Principle

Readings: Psalm 19; Exodus 19:16-25; Mark 9:2-8

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: *Dear God, giver of all that we have and hold. You desire that all we do would bear witness to your selfless love. As you have blessed us, so we bless those around us. In proportion to what we have received, may we give. In Jesus name. Amen.*

Focal Verse: Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" **Mark 9:7**

Reflection:

There are many ways we can offer our thanks to God, and giving from our financial resources is an important, effective, and practical means of expressing our love of our Creator.

Proportionate giving is a method of Christian giving in which we deliberately set aside a specific percentage of our annual income to give to God through the ministry of the church. We are giving back to God a proportion of that which came from God – a portion of the blessings God has bestowed on us.³⁰

Three steps toward proportionate giving are 1) assess your current financial resources, 2) select a percentage amount and 3) apply the percentage amount to your current resources.

Current financial resources: for many this is primarily income received from working. Others sources include investment income, rental income and growth in capital resources (ie. stocks, bonds, land, other holdings). What are my current financial resources?

Percentage amount: a Biblical tithe is 10% of current income. That is a reasonable goal to grow toward. For other income sources consider 1% of current values. What is your current percentage? What do you desire this percentage to grow toward?

Apply the percentage to your current financial resources. Use the appropriate percentage for each resource type. Earned income, income from interest and rents, and value growth from capital assets (land, stocks, investments, etc.). What is the dollar amount for each type? How will you make this available as a thankful offering to God for all you have received?

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

³⁰ www.poplutheran.com/Stewardship