



# A Life of Stewardship

1 Peter 4:10

## **A Life of Stewardship**

### **Biblical Stewardship Principles**

- I. God's Stewards Are God's Stewards.
- II. God's Stewards Are Managers, Not Owners.
- III. God's Stewards Are Saints And Sinners.
- IV. God's Stewards Are Uniquely Singular,  
Yet Profoundly Plural.
- V. God's Stewards Are In The World, But Not Of The World.
- VI. God's Stewards Are Loved And Loving.
- VII. God's Stewards Are Served And Serving.
- VIII. God's Stewards Live With An Awareness Of  
The Present And Future, Of Time And Eternity.

The eight principles fit nicely under two umbrellas. The first is the following definition of Christian stewardship that has been used in our church body for a few decades:

***“Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God’s family, the church, in managing all of life and life’s resources for God’s purposes.”***

The second umbrella is ***“Maturing stewards do the right things for the right reasons and strive for excellence in all they do!”***

May God bless your study of the Biblical Stewardship Principles and your leadership in sharing the principles with God’s people to help them form God-pleasing attitudes toward Christian Stewardship and respond with good stewardship of their lives and resources.

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## **I. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS**

### **What does this mean?**

God's stewards are stewards by virtue of creation and their re-creation in Holy Baptism; therefore, they belong to the Lord.

When you first hear the words of this principle you may think it's just another example of double-talk. But it's not. Rather it is the articulation of the foundational principle that God is the Creator of all things and that He has redeemed, or re-created, us in Holy Baptism. Stewardship is, as a Lutheran leader long ago said, "everything I do after I say I believe."

Therefore, stewards do not "belong" to the congregation in the sense that the congregation insists only those things done for the congregation are examples of good stewardship. Stewards "belong" to God and, as they mature, they seek out God's will for their stewardship attitudes and practices. They have a right to know what God is up to in this world and to support that work with their time, talents and resources as they are led by the Spirit.

## **I. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

**Rom. 6:4**

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (cf. 6:1-11)

**2 Cor. 5:16-17**

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (cf. 5:14-17)

Romans 6:4 is the classic passage explaining our connection in baptism to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit who lives within us after baptism enables us to do those things pleasing to God. In baptism we have been “resurrected” to live new lives, mindful of God at work in our lives and the mercy and power we receive from Him. Thank God for the refreshing and renewing waters of baptism and the marvelous change it makes in our daily lives!

The words of 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 state clearly that we are new creations in Christ. We are no longer content to live according to our own sin natures or according to the will and ways of the world. We set our minds on those things which are above, where Christ is seated (Colossians 3:1-4). By our baptisms we have been transformed as St. Paul speaks about in Romans 12:1-8. Spend some time reflecting on what it means to be new creations in Christ!

## **I. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS**

### **Eph. 2:8-10**

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Verses 8-10 of Ephesians 2 eloquently state the truth that we are God's workmanship and this is all a matter of grace. It is so comforting to know that our salvation does not depend upon us and our works; if it did, we would never have the assurance that we have done enough. Make sure you spend some time reflecting on verse 10. We Christians have not just been "saved from" but we have also been "saved for," that is, saved for doing good works which honor God and bless others.

## **I. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS**

### **Gen. 1:1**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

### **Is. 43:1**

But now, this is what the Lord says--he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name; you are mine. (cf. 43:1-3a)

Genesis 1:1 underscores the basic truth that God created all things, visible and invisible, and thus He is the rightful Owner of all things. If we do not have this basic principle of “ownership” in the proper perspective, then we are tempted to believe that all the things we surround ourselves with are ours to do with as we please.

Isaiah 43:1 affirms that God is our Creator and Redeemer. He loves us so much that He knows us by name and cares about how we live our lives. St. Paul confirms this truth when he writes: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

## I. **GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS**

### **How is this done?**

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Recognize that we are made stewards by God's activity;
- Respect Christian stewards for Whose they are; and,
- Remind stewards that they are God's new creation each day.

Do not move too quickly through the six implications of this principle and its meaning and supporting passages. Let your group wrestle with these implications and discuss how we can carry out the first three and avoid the last three.

Explore carefully the three positive implications beginning with recognize, respect and remind. These three simple implications are rich in meaning and application. For example, what a marvelous thing it is to be able to share with God's people that they are "God's new creation each day!" Give your study group time to reflect on these implications and share experiences that relate directly to them.

## I. **GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS**

### **How is this done?**

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Use short-cut methods that consider stewards to be merely "donors," "clients" or "customers" or means to an end;
- Neglect to name the name of the Lord who is the Source of all stewardship; or,
- Present stewardship as limited to a single area of life, such as money.

Take time to also explore the negative implications. Undoubtedly members of your group can probably give personal examples of when they felt treated like donors, clients, customers or means to an end. Now, please be aware that there is nothing wrong with the title of donors; the other titles—clients, customers, or means to an end—may be more questionable. The point of this implication is that we agree not to use manipulative or short-cut methods to solicit gifts for our favorite causes without much consideration of the donor's favorite cause.

Use the last implication to underscore the truth that stewardship is best when it is treated as whole-life, year-round and for all ages. Good Christian stewardship does involve our use and management of money, but it is much more than that. God is always seeking to establish a relationship with us that will move us to respond freely and joyfully, not out of a sense of duty or obligation



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## II. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS, NOT OWNERS

### **What does this mean?**

God's stewards have been entrusted with life and life's resources and given the privilege of responsibly and joyfully managing them for Him.

Take some time to discuss the phrase “entrusted with life and life’s resources” pointing out that all we surround ourselves with, such as houses, cars, appliances, furniture, clothes, sports equipment and the like, are not really ours. They belong to God who has “entrusted” them to us to manage for His purposes. It is true that we have “worked” to “earn” money to pay for these things, but when you trace work back to such items as health, skills, opportunities and the like, you realize that if it were not for the grace and blessing of God we would have none of these things.

Discuss the concept of “privilege.” Not all people are so privileged. It is not necessary to look to the poverty pockets of certain regions in Africa. In our own congregations and neighborhoods we see people who are not so privileged. Who are we to be so richly blessed by God? We are His stewards who are privileged to manage a portion of that which rightfully belongs to God, the Creator and Provider.

The challenge of this principle is not only to avoid the false notion that we are owners but also to affirm and live out the truth that we are managers, or trustees, of that which belongs to God and we are to manage it all in ways that honor God, extend His kingdom and bless others.

## II. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS, NOT OWNERS

### What does God's Word say about this?

#### **Gen. 2:15**

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

#### **Ps. 24:1**

The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. (cf. Ps. 89:11)

Genesis 2:15 indicates that Adam, before the fall into sin, was given the responsibility to work and care for God's garden. Work is a blessing although sin has made it oppressive and draining at times. That's part of what God meant when he said that Adam would earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow and would have to fight thorns and thistles in the process (Genesis 3:17-19).

Psalm 24:1 is one of those foundational verses in the Bible. It clearly states that all things belong to God. Psalm 89:11 is only one of many other verses that affirms the "Ownership" of God.

**II. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS,  
NOT OWNERS**

**2 Cor. 8:5**

And they [Macedonian Christians] did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. (cf. 8:1-7)

**Luke 12:48b**

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. (cf. 12:41-48)

2 Corinthians 8:5 speaks of the marvelous example of the Macedonian Christians who were poor in the eyes of many, but responded generously by giving themselves first to the Lord and then to the work at hand. Read the whole section from 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 to get a fuller picture of who these Macedonians were and what they did that still serves as encouragement for us today.

Luke 12:48b articulates a clear expectation of God when He entrusts so much to His people to manage wisely and well.

**II. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS,  
NOT OWNERS**

**1 Chron. 29:14**

But whom am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. (cf. 29:1-20)

1 Chronicles 29:14 puts things into perspective. Take time to skim the passages that go before verse 14 to get an appreciation of the incredible amounts of gold, silver and other materials that went into the building of the temple of Solomon. It boggles your mind when you consider what hundreds of tons of gold and silver must have looked like. What generosity on the part of David, his officials and the people! But then David puts it into the proper perspective pointing out that he and his people were only giving back a portion of that which comes from God in the first place. What a stewardship truth!

## II. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS, NOT OWNERS

### **1 Tim. 6:17-19**

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

The words of 1 Timothy 6:17-19 contain a number of important points:

- 1) we are rich, especially when we compare ourselves and our lifestyles with those who struggle to simply meet the basic needs of life;
- 2) we are to put our hope in God, not in uncertain wealth;
- 3) God provides us with so many things for our enjoyment;
- 4) we are under orders to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and willing to share;
- 5) by following God's expectations we will lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven and live the good life God has intended for us.

God is a God of abundance, not a God of scarcity. When you think about the four mathematical functions of adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing you quickly realize that God delights in adding and multiplying while we are naturally inclined toward subtracting and dividing. Consider the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21).

## II. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS, NOT OWNERS

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Encourage proper management of all of life and life's resources for God's purposes;
- Promote materials and approaches to stewards that are firmly grounded in the Owner/manager understanding of stewardship;
- Encourage cheerful, firstfruit, proportionate (including but not limited to tithing) living and giving in all areas of life by Christian stewards; and,
- Receive and use God's gifts with thanksgiving.

The positive implications provide an excellent summary of the passages of Scripture that pertain to our Christian stewardship. The fourth implication reminds us that we may have trouble with giving because we have trouble with receiving. This may be especially true for men who tend to be self-reliant, not needing anything from anybody. Luther was wise in explaining that we are to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving (The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer).

## II. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS, NOT OWNERS

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Approach the steward as if he or she is the Owner;
- Neglect to remind the steward of Who the Owner is;
- Forget the Owner for the sake of the interests of the entity being represented; or,
- Fail to remind Christian stewards that greater blessings call for greater responsibility to manage them according to God's purposes.

The negative implications deal with that important concept of ownership. It is so easy to think that we “own” things that we have purchased with “our” money that we “earned” with our hard work. All the things we enjoy are gifts from God. They are intended for us to enjoy and share, not to hoard and use only for ourselves. Solomon in Proverbs 30:8-9 gave us some good wisdom when he wrote: “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

This principle really gets at the heart of Christian stewardship. Only when we recognize God as the true Owner and ourselves as stewards, trustees and managers can we live lives that are full and free from worry. It is not wrong to have things, even in abundance, but it is wrong to put our hope, trust and sense of worth in things!



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### **III. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS**

#### **What does this mean?**

God's stewards rejoice in and live out what the Lord has declared them to be through the cross.

At the same time His stewards recognize they are sinners who fight sin and its consequences each day.

All eight of the Biblical Stewardship Principles involve a tension. This third principle underscores the classic Lutheran understanding that we are at the very same time saints and sinners. Take time to discuss and reflect on how we are declared righteous saints through Christ and how, at the very same time, we struggle with sin of every kind. Paul's words in Romans 7:21-25 describe the conflict we live with each day.

### **III. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

**Eph. 4:22-24**

You were taught, which regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (cf.Col. 3:5-17)

The text of Ephesians 4:22-24 deals with the old self and the new self. Note that we are to be active in putting off the old self as we are made new (passive, because it is God's doing). We are not able to put off the old self or put on the new self until God has worked the miracle of conversion in us. Then we are able to make choices for good and evil and can no longer use a lame excuse like "the devil made me do it." Take time to discuss what we Lutherans mean by justification and sanctification, and point out that justification is a done deal, but sanctification is a life-long process. Daily we are encouraged to become what God has already declared us to be—saints!

### **III. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS**

#### **Rom. 7:21-25**

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 7:21-25: These classic words which Paul penned by inspiration of the Holy Spirit describe the struggle all Christians face daily. Just when we want to do our very best, we find that evil is crouching in the shadows! Thanks be to God that we are fully forgiven in Christ from the guilt of our sin, but we must still deal with the consequences of our sin. Take some time with your group to discuss the difference between the guilt of sin and the consequences of sin. For example, a convicted murderer can, by God's grace, become a truly converted Christian. As such his heinous sin is forgiven before God; yet he must face the consequences of his terrible crime which may include life in prison or execution.

### **III. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS**

#### **1 Peter 2:9-10**

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In 1 Peter 2:9-10 we find four glowing titles for the children of God. Each title deserves discussion and reflection. For example, what does it mean to be a “chosen people?” Each title is meant to give us encouragement and hope. Verse 10 describes the marvelous transition from being “spiritual nobodies” to becoming “spiritual some bodies!” Our Christian stewardship includes giving a winsome witness to the hope that is within us because of Christ (see also 1 Peter 3:15).

### **III. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS**

#### **1 John 3:1-2**

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

The words of 1 John 3:1-2 are among the most beautiful pieces of Gospel in the Bible. To be God's children is the greatest thing that can happen to us. The challenge, of course, is to become what God has already declared us to be—that is, His children. One day we will shine in glory but here we struggle daily. Yet we are not to become faint-hearted, but are to remain faithful unto death and we will receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10b).

### III. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS

#### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Recognize that the potential for great good, or great evil, lies in the way stewardship is presented and received;
- Evaluate carefully all communication, oral or written, according to the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, and in keeping with the biblical truth that each steward is at the same time saint and sinner; and,
- Offer varying opportunities for Christian stewards to grow, recognizing that they are at different points of spiritual maturity.

The first of the three positive implications deals with the giving and taking of offense in the way stewardship is presented and received. As with other cases of giving and taking of offense, it may be that offense is taken when none is intended. The challenge is to present Christian stewardship based on God's Word; then, if people have concerns, they have to deal with God, not with any human teacher. The challenge is also to present stewardship as a critical part of our sanctification since stewardship in the wider sense is basically the same thing as sanctification.

The second positive implication encourages us to evaluate all we say and write regarding Christian stewardship. It is easy to make stewardship into a "moral issue" rather than treating it as a "Gospel response."

The third positive implication encourages us to remember that all of God's stewards are not at the same level of maturity. It is also a reminder that all of us have areas in our lives that have not been sanctified. Some stewards are still taking baby steps while others take giant strides, but the truth remains that all of us have fallen short of God's righteous expectations. We are to work patiently with each other, doing that which builds up rather than that which tears down. St. Paul speaks about this kind of conduct in Romans 14 and Galatians 6.

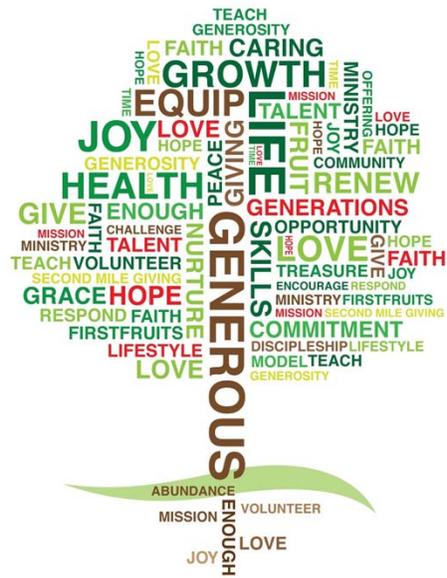
### III. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS

#### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Assume that, because we are dealing with Christians, we can set aside the proper application of Law and Gospel in serving God's stewards;
- See all Christians as being at the same maturity level; or,
- Use any approach to stewards that appeals to the sinful nature, selfish interest, or something other than faith active in love.

The first negative implication reminds us to be careful to rightly divide Law and Gospel and apply them properly to the lives of God's people. The second negative implication repeats the caution that is expressed in the third positive implication. The final negative implication encourages us to examine carefully what we do and how we do it when dealing with stewardship activities and education for God's stewards.



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#### **IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

##### **What does this mean?**

God's stewards recognize that their lives are not solo performances but are personal responses to God, lived out within the community of faith to benefit the whole world.

We often hear the assertion that stewardship is a matter between me and the Lord and no one else. God's Word teaches otherwise. This principle is sensitive to the truth that stewardship is a very personal response, but it is at the same time a community activity. God's stewards are part of the body of Christ and relate to Christ as part of the body, not as a single member connected directly to the Head, that is, Christ. We relate to Christ by being part of the body. We are in this together for the benefit of each other and others whose lives we can touch with the good news of Jesus.

**IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

**1 Cor. 12:12-13**

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The words of 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 emphasize that the body of Christ is a single unit made up of many parts, just like our human bodies are units made up of many different parts which all have different functions and yet work together for the welfare of the body. God's Holy Spirit is the One who works in each of us to will and to do that which is pleasing to God and good for the other members of the body.

**IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY  
SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

**1 Pet. 4:10**

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

St. Peter in 1 Peter 4:10 states that we are gifted as we are so we can serve one another. Using our gifts for the benefit of others is the right and Godly thing to do!

**IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

**2 Cor. 8:13-14**

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality.

The words of 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 speak about sharing in such a way that the needs of all people are met. In Deuteronomy 15:4-8 God told Moses that when the Israelites were in the land of Canaan there were to be no poor among them, because God would provide more than enough for everybody. However, a few verses later God gave some regulations meant to help the poor satisfy their basic needs. God provides, but man divides! That second part is where the problem lies. People around the world are starving and doing without what we consider the basic necessities of life and it is not because God has not provided enough to satisfy the desires of all His creatures. This is a touchy issue, but one which needs to be addressed because St. Paul clearly states the case for equality by sharing.

**IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY  
SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

**Gal. 6:10**

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (cf. 6:7-10)

Galatians 6:10 states that charity begins at home but it doesn't end there. We do have a special responsibility to the fellow members of the body of Christ, but we also have the responsibility to work together for the welfare of our communities and world.

**IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY  
SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

**Rom. 12:4-5**

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

St. Paul in Romans 12:4-5 writes about how we relate to each other and how we are to have concern for one another. It would be good to read through all of Romans 12:1-8 to establish the context. It is human nature to seek recognition and praise for doing what are considered the more important things. God has blessed and endowed each of us with special gifts and talents and we serve best when we discover what these gifts and talents are and then use them faithfully. In God's eyes the janitor who cleans the church facilities and cleans them well is just as much a faithful part of the body as the pastor who does a very good job of carrying out the functions of his ministry. We work together for the common good.

#### **IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

##### **How is this done?**

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Emphasize the privilege and the accountability this privilege entails of being unique children of God with specific gifts that honor the Lord and bless others;
- Recognize the personal and sensitive nature of the steward's response; and yet emphasize the truth that Christian stewards are members of the Body of Christ and are in kingdom work together with fellow Christians; and,

The first positive implication underscores the two aspects of “privilege” and “accountability.” It is a privilege to be children of God with special gifts that He carefully and lovingly bestows upon us. But with all these gifts comes the responsibility to use them in ways that honor God and bless others.

The second positive implication recognizes the personal and sensitive nature of the steward’s response. Some may remember the days when churches published the names and contributions of members. These were sometimes referred to as “scandal sheets.” Discuss the pros and cons of this practice. You may also want to discuss the practice of pledging. There is additional information for such a discussion in the booklet entitled “Ways to Gather Annual Commitments” from the Congregational Stewardship Workbook.

#### **IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

##### **How is this done?**

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Remind Christian stewards that God showers blessings upon those who manage them wisely and well for the common good.

The third positive implication asserts that we cannot overemphasize the truth that Christian stewards are members of the body of Christ and are in kingdom work together.

The fourth positive implication is a reminder that God gives His gifts in proportion to how each steward can manage them. He gives gifts with the expectation that they will be managed wisely for the common good. People like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David were very blessed and they used their blessings for the welfare of others.

#### **IV. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL**

##### **How is this done?**

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Emphasize one aspect or area of church work to the exclusion or detriment of others;
- Teach or influence in ways which minimize the steward's connection to and need for the rest of the Body of Christ; or,
- Equate stewardship with merely meeting an organization's budget or financial goal.

The first negative implication reminds us that all areas and aspects of church work are important and all of them should receive attention. It is so easy to want to do the very visible, seemingly more important jobs and let some of the other necessary, but not as seemingly important jobs go unattended. Each member can contribute to the welfare of the body and each member's faithful contribution is important and worthy of praise.

The second negative implication warns us to avoid the "Lone Ranger" syndrome. We have not been called and gifted to be "Lone Rangers" but rather to be responsible members of the body of Christ. We need the body and the body needs us!

The third negative implication warns us against thinking that our congregation is practicing good stewardship simply because it meets its budget. There are so many other things involved with good stewardship, such as helping fellow members to grow as disciples--reaching out to the community with the good news of Jesus, providing opportunities to serve, faithfully supporting the professional church workers and other ministries such as the Sunday School.



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## **V. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD**

### **What does this mean?**

God's stewards recognize that the Lord sets them apart from the world and by the transforming power of the Gospel sends them into the world to live out the Gospel.

This principle reminds us that God's people, the church, are the *ekklesia*--the Greek word meaning "that which is called out" or, the "called out ones." Jesus acknowledged this identity when He prayed this part of His high priestly prayer (John 17:15-18): "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." God does not want to take us out of the world before our allotted time; rather, He wants us to remain here as the light and salt of the world. However, there is danger in this world because the prince of this world is Satan himself and he has so many human and spiritual allies to work against Christians and the Christian faith. The added challenge is that our old human nature is inclined toward evil. That's why we say that our three great spiritual enemies are Satan, the world and our own sinful nature. Take some time to explore and discuss what it means to be "in the world" but "not of the world."

**V. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE IN THE WORLD,  
BUT NOT OF THE WORLD**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

**John 17:15-18**

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into this world, I have sent them into the world. (cf. John 20:21-23)

This principle reminds us that God's people, the church, are the *ekklesia*--the Greek word meaning "that which is called out" or, the "called out ones." Jesus acknowledged this identity when He prayed this part of His high priestly prayer (John 17:15-18): "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." God does not want to take us out of the world before our allotted time; rather, He wants us to remain here as the light and salt of the world. However, there is danger in this world because the prince of this world is Satan himself and he has so many human and spiritual allies to work against Christians and the Christian faith. The added challenge is that our old human nature is inclined toward evil. That's why we say that our three great spiritual enemies are Satan, the world and our own sinful nature. Take some time to explore and discuss what it means to be "in the world" but "not of the world."

**V. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE IN THE WORLD,  
BUT NOT OF THE WORLD**

**Rom. 12:2**

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The words of Romans 12:2 encourage us to put off the patterns of this world by surrendering to the renewing power of God. We have been baptized into the newness of life and the same Spirit that entered us at our baptisms is there to strengthen us against the wiles of the Devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. With the power of the Spirit we are able to “test and approve” what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will. As St. Paul reminded the Philippians (2:13): “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”

**V. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE IN THE WORLD,  
BUT NOT OF THE WORLD**

**John 16:33**

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Jesus' promise in John 16:33 is meant for our comfort. We will find more than our share of trouble in this world. The more we witness to our faith in Jesus Christ, the more we are apt to be harassed. The more perfectly we live as "called out ones," the more we will seem out of the step with the world and its attractions and temptations. But Jesus knows that and encourages us to "take heart because He has overcome the world." Share and discuss some examples of how this happens in the lives of God's people.

**V. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE IN THE WORLD,  
BUT NOT OF THE WORLD**

**Gen. 12:1-3**

The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Abram (Abraham) was one of the original "called out ones." Read and study Genesis 12:1-3 to gain a fuller appreciation of what Abram (Abraham) was asked to leave in order to follow God's lead to the land of promise where he would become the father of a great nation. See Hebrews 11:8-10 for more information on the call of Abram (Abraham) and his response by faith.

## V. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Emphasize how the Gospel transforms stewards' attitudes in, about and toward the world;
- Emphasize the Christian witness of stewards in the decisions that are made; and,
- Encourage the support of appropriate projects and activities both within and outside the church.

The first positive implication is a reminder that we are to relate to the world as God does. God so loved “the world” (including the sinful and rebellious people) that He sent His only-begotten Son to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of “the world.” God’s Holy Spirit helps us to have the same kind of compassion for the world that our God has. He does not want any to perish, but rather to have all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Discuss how this plays out in our lives and witness to those who are outside the church.

The second positive implication reminds us that we are witnesses at all times. As soon as others find out we are Christians they will watch what we say and do and see if that fits with who we claim to be—the children of God. This is another reminder that God’s stewards do the right things for the right reasons. Oftentimes our actions speak louder than our words. We are known for what we do as well as what we refuse to do.

The third positive implication reminds us that our stewardship is lived out in the world, not just in the church. Consider the words of Psalm 23:5-6 where it says that God prepares a table for us “in the presence of our enemies.” It is easy to be a Christian on Sunday in church; it’s a bit more challenging on Monday and the rest of the days of the week when we are often surrounded by many people who do not share our Christian faith and hope. We are to support the projects and activities

that benefit our local congregations, but we are also to support those projects and activities that touch the lives of others outside of our church membership.

## V. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Limit the scope of Christian stewardship only to "church-related" projects and activities;
- Use spiritually defective approaches and motivations from the world that are based mainly and primarily on the criterion that they "work;" or,
- Forget the daily tensions and struggles of being God's stewards in but not of the world.

The first negative implication urges us to understand that Christian stewardship involves our entire lives, not just what we do "within the church." The giving of time and money to help with community activities and projects is also a part of Christian stewardship. We are to do both, not just one or the other.

The second negative implication urges us to do the right things for the right reasons. We are not to use human motivations like guilt, embarrassment, or high pressure tactics to get people to do what we think they should do. Such motivations may seem to produce results, but they do not develop Christian stewards.

The third negative implication reminds us that we and all other people live our daily lives with all kinds of tensions and struggles. We all have busy schedules and many commitments, maybe more than we should have. We may have financial concerns, work concerns, school concerns, neighborhood concerns, health concerns, family concerns and the list can go on and on. It is easy to get overwhelmed by the anxieties of this life. That's why God's stewards need to keep going back to their true source of strength—the words of hope and encouragement from our God and the fellowship of like-minded stewards. We also want to avoid laying heavy loads on each other.



## A Life of Stewardship

1 Peter 4:10

## **VI.**

## **GOD'S STEWARDS ARE LOVED AND LOVING**

### **What does this mean?**

God's stewards recognize that their stewardship flows out of God's act of love for them in Christ which empowers them, in turn, to love others in acts of Christ-like love.

This principle could really be the foundational principle for the other seven. The love that God has shown and continues to show to us through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is what motivates us to do the right things for the right reasons. Jesus loves us into God's family; He doesn't force or compel us or anyone else into that special family. John, the Apostle of love, has by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, written down numerous passages that could be used to support this principle and its meaning. Three of those verses are included in our study.

**VI.**

**GOD'S STEWARDS ARE  
LOVED AND LOVING**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

**1 John 4:19**

We love because he first loved us. (cf. 1 John 4:11)

The truth expressed in 1 John 4:19 is that God took the first step in our faith relationship. We can love only because He first loved us. This is *agape* love—God’s love--unconditional and never-ending! This love keeps reaching out to us even when we act in rebellion. St. Paul expressed it well when he wrote: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). What a marvelous love indeed!

## **VI.**

## **GOD'S STEWARDS ARE LOVED AND LOVING**

### **John 13:34-35**

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.

### **2 Cor. 5:14-15**

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

John in his Gospel, 13:34-35, writes about the new command of Christ to love one another. What was so “new” about this? The Old Testament Creed was stated in Deuteronomy 6:4-5: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” The “Jesus Creed” added the second part of the commandment: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Those who love their neighbors as themselves are following the “Jesus Creed.” In so doing they give evidence that they are Christ’s disciples. The mark of a true disciple, a Godly steward, is love for one another. Yes, Jesus gave it as a command, but how wonderful when it happens because it becomes our method of operation!

St. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 that Christ’s love compels us to show love to God and to others. It leaves us with no other choice except to give in to destructive self-indulgence. Out of divine love Christ “emptied” Himself (Philippians 2:5-11) and became the Suffering Servant to rescue us from sin, death and everlasting condemnation. His love compels us to follow in His footsteps and live no longer only for ourselves, but for Him who died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25).

## VI.

## GOD'S STEWARDS ARE LOVED AND LOVING

### **1 John 3:16-18**

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

The text of 1 John 3:16-18 offers a strong encouragement to love each other, not just with words, but with actions. Among other things, this passage speaks about sharing our material possessions with those in need. The early Christian church excelled in this activity of sharing. Look at Acts 4:32-35. They went so far as to sell land and houses and put the proceeds into a common pool! From there it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Look at James 2:14-17; 26 for more encouragement to love each other and demonstrate it by acts of love. James says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

**VI.**

**GOD'S STEWARDS ARE  
LOVED AND LOVING**

**Gal. 5:6b**

That only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Galatians 5:6 states that when all is said and done, “the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

## VI.

## GOD'S STEWARDS ARE LOVED AND LOVING

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Emphasize that all activities of Christian stewards done in faith and love are properly Christian stewardship.
- Honor the choices God's people make as they exercise Christ-like love; and,
- Use only those approaches, strategies and methods that reflect the Gospel and build up the stewards' faith active in love.

The first positive implication reminds us that our Christian stewardship really involves all the activities of our lives, not just those done in the church setting. We are stewards in the home, in school, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, indeed, wherever we come into contact with other people. See also Mark 9:41 and Matthew 10:42 for further illustrations of how we show love.

The second positive implication encourages us not to pass judgment on what others do in their stewardship. Each steward is responsible for his/her own motivation for doing that which is right. We may not all make the same choices or may prefer one choice above another, but God's people are free to make stewardship choices when they exercise Christ-like love.

The third positive implication urges us to use only those approaches, strategies and methods that reflect the Gospel and seek to build one another up. Thank God we have each other to encourage us to be maturing stewards who bring forth the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

## VI.

## GOD'S STEWARDS ARE LOVED AND LOVING

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Employ techniques and fundraising methods that fail to emphasize God's love in Christ as the basis and motivation for Christian stewardship;
- Minimize the bringing of regular offerings as a part of worship and a loving response to God's love for us; or,
- De-emphasize or set aside God's love and our response in order to meet budgets, quotas and goals

The first negative implication urges us to avoid any technique or fundraising method to encourage God's stewards to give of themselves other than the love of God in Christ. To use such worldly methods to raise funds or some other noble cause may indeed appear to be successful, but it is not because it uses the wrong motivation.

The second negative implication urges us to not minimize the bringing of regular offerings as a part of our worship and loving response to what God has done for us in Christ. Maturing stewards find joy in giving freely and generously without being compelled by rules or guilt to do so.

The third negative implication encourages us to move from giving to a need to a need for giving. God is love, and in His love, He gives. The giving of His only-begotten Son (John 3:16) is the best gift He gives to us, but it is not the only gift. Look at Luther's explanation to the Fourth Petition "Give us this day our daily bread" to reflect on all that our God of love gives to us on a daily basis. As we grow in our giving we grow more and more like God who delights in giving! Giving is at the very heart of His nature!



## A Life of Stewardship

1 Peter 4:10

## **VII.**

## **GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SERVED AND SERVING**

### **What does this mean?**

God's stewards recognize that their stewardship involves a Gospel-powered style of life which is demonstrated in servanthood within all the arenas of life.

Being a servant is one of the clearest marks of a Christian steward! To live as a servant is to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ who made the claim that He did not come into this world to be served, but rather to serve, all the way to laying down His life. One of the tests of a servant is this: are you willing to do the good and necessary things which others may find demeaning and distasteful? A servant is not too proud to do what some may consider too menial. St. Paul urged his followers to be imitators of his servant attitude and actions as he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

The meaning of this principle indicates that we are to demonstrate servanthood within all the arenas of life. The word "arenas" was deliberately chosen because it refers not only to the "areas" of life but also to all the situations and settings in which we can practice what it means to be serving stewards.

## **VII.**

## **GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SERVED AND SERVING**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

### **Phil. 2:5-8**

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- death on a cross.

The words of Philippians 2:5-8 describe the attitude and actions of Jesus. Right attitudes added to right actions equal what it means to be a steward. Jesus leads the way. He was willing to "empty Himself, not insisting on His full rights as God," in order to become the Suffering Servant of God who laid down His holy and precious life as the perfect sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world. Truly we respond with the hymn writer when he says, "What wondrous love is this!"

It is helpful to consider also verses 9-11 to see the rest of the story. Christ stooped to conquer and now He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings with no equal! His servant heart is still evident as He continually intercedes with the Heavenly Father on our behalf!

## **VII.**

## **GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SERVED AND SERVING**

### **John 13:3-5**

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

The memorable scene of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples in that Upper Room in Jerusalem was meant to be a powerful object lesson for His disciples then and for His disciples of all ages. Read and study John 13:3-5; 15-17 and other verses which put these words into their proper context and pray that we as Christian stewards may have the kind of servant heart that is willing to “wash feet.”

**VII.**

**GOD'S STEWARDS ARE  
SERVED AND SERVING**

**John 13:15-17**

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

The memorable scene of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples in that Upper Room in Jerusalem was meant to be a powerful object lesson for His disciples then and for His disciples of all ages. Read and study John 13:3-5; 15-17 and other verses which put these words into their proper context and pray that we as Christian stewards may have the kind of servant heart that is willing to “wash feet.”

**VII.**

**GOD'S STEWARDS ARE  
SERVED AND SERVING**

**Matt. 20:26b-28**

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (cf. Matt. 25:31-46)

Verses 26b-28 of Matthew 20 clearly state that in the Kingdom of God greatness is measured in terms of service. Take time to read through Matthew 25:31-46 to see how much emphasis Christ puts on showing acts of mercy and kindness to even the least of His brothers and sisters.

## VII.

## GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SERVED AND SERVING

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Recognize that service done for the benefit of the community and world is also part of Christian stewardship;
- Emphasize that just as Jesus came to serve, stewards are privileged to serve others through their abilities and resources; and,
- Adopt the attitude of a servant in all our relationships with others.

The first positive implication recognizes that service within the church is important but so is service for the benefit of the community and the world. We are not to restrict our best service only for those within the church, but also, and especially, for those outside the church. Those who witnessed the bond of love in the Christian Church (both insiders and outsiders) as described in the opening chapters of Acts marveled at the love that was shown to one another. Christian love is at the heart of Christian stewardship!

The second positive implication speaks of the “privilege” that we have to be serving stewards. God has blessed us so that we can be blessings to others. Members of a family find joy in giving to and serving each other; likewise, members of God’s family delight in being able to use their gifts and resources to serve others.

St. Paul in Romans 12:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 12-14 states over and over again how important it is to love and serve in true humility. That attitude of humility and service is covered in the third positive implication.

## VII.

## GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SERVED AND SERVING

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Set aside servanthood for the sake of merely reaching an organizational goal;
- Fail to encourage stewards to be God's servants in any decision or action; or,
- Fail to challenge stewards to serve the Lord with personal acts of compassion and service as well as financial gifts.

The first negative implication warns us against putting goals ahead of servanthood. True Christian servants seek to do that which is in the best interest and welfare of others, not to use or manipulate others simply to get a job done.

The second negative implication encourages Christian stewards (servants) to be mindful of the heart of being a servant in all decisions and actions. It is far too easy to strive after “personal goals” rather than “corporate goals.”

The third negative implication reminds Christian stewards (servants) of the importance of being good stewards of time, talents and resources, not just one or two of the three, but all three! All the blessings from God—time, talents and treasure—are to be used in ways that honor Him and bless our fellow human beings.



## A Life of Stewardship

1 Peter 4:10

**VIII. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF TIME AND ETERNITY**

**What does this mean?**

God's stewards live intentionally in the light of the Lord's eternal purpose while being firmly committed to the here and now.

Many of us may remember our mothers screaming frantically at us when they caught us doing something that we should not have been doing. Their words might have been something along this line: "What on earth are you doing for heaven's sake!" Well, depending on where you put the accent, that can be a very good question. "What on earth" are you doing for "heaven's sake?" Or, to put it another way, "What are you doing here and now that will make a difference for all eternity?"

None of us wants to become so "heavenly-minded" that we are no earthly good. On the flip side of the coin none of us wants to become so "earthly-minded" that we are no "heavenly good." This principle lays out the tension with which we all live. We are citizens of this world and, specifically of the nation in which we live, but, as St. Paul reminds us, we are also citizens of a heavenly kingdom (Philippians 3:20-21). Therefore, we live and move and have our being in two kingdoms and Christian stewards are keenly aware of that truth and strive to live with that tension.

What we contribute (time, talents and treasure) to our church and other worthwhile charities in the present is important; what we can contribute in the future and even after our deaths through our wills, trusts and gift plans is also important. The implications for this principle remind us of these truths.

**VIII. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN  
AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF  
TIME AND ETERNITY**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

**Matt. 6:19-21**

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21 reminds us of treasures that are really treasures. It is so easy in this consumer-driven culture to strive for earthly possessions and to store them up in abundance. Sadly, the pursuit of earthly wealth and possessions has led many down the pathway of Demas (2 Timothy 4:9) who loved this world so much he deserted the pathway of Christianity. St. Paul also reminds us that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:10).

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” We sometimes hear this statement turned around to read, “Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also.” We must let the statement stand as our Lord gave it and keep watch over our lives and our desires so that our “real and lasting treasures” are not the things of this world.

**VIII. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN  
AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF  
TIME AND ETERNITY**

**2 Pet. 3:11-12a**

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

**Rev. 14:13**

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow [with] them."

The Apostle Peter reminds us that all these material things that we often get too attached to will one day all go up in smoke (2 Peter 3:11-12). We are encouraged to look at the content and truths expressed in the first three Scripture readings that support this principle so that we keep the main things the main things.

St. John in Revelation 14:13 assures us that all the deeds done in the name of Jesus for the welfare of others will follow us into eternity. All of us have an innate desire to cast a giant shadow. Through our Godly use of time, talents and treasure we can cast a shadow that is so big it will reach into eternity.

**VIII. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN  
AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF  
TIME AND ETERNITY**

**1 Tim. 6:17-19**

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

The words of 1 Timothy 6:17-19 form the scriptural foundation for the ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation. One could spend much time pondering the richness of this text. We may think that “command those who are rich” refers to the millionaires and others who have more than enough of this world’s goods. The truth is that if we compare ourselves with a majority of people living on this planet, we are wealthy and thus included in this command. We are always to put our hope in God not in “things” that can so easily come and go and will someday all go up in smoke! Notice how these verses help us to identify what the real treasures are that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 6:19-21.

God is not miserly with His blessings and they are given for our enjoyment. But with many gifts come many temptations and that is where Christian stewards have to be alert and careful. The antidote for hoarding and storing up treasures for ourselves is found in doing good, being rich in good deeds, being generous and willing to share. Take ample time to reflect on these verses and their applications for living the kind of life that is really life and can fit into words like “Living is giving” and “You begin to live when you learn to give.”

**VIII. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN  
AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF  
TIME AND ETERNITY**

**Phil. 3:12-14,20**

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul in Philippians 3:12-14; 20 underscores the truth that it is “hope” that keeps us going. And this hope is not merely a dream or wishful thinking, but it is a sure hope based on what Christ has done for us as our Redeemer and Savior. This hope helps us put the past in the past, where it largely belongs, and consider the life that now is and the life that is to come. This hope also gives us comfort in the face of sin. Because of our old human nature we still do sin, but in Christ we have forgiveness for those sins and that forgiveness provides us with a fresh start each day!

## VIII. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF TIME AND ETERNITY

### How is this done?

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will:**

- Point out the eternal dimensions inherent in all that stewards decide to do or not to do;
- Pursue good planning for the present and future as part of stewardship education; and,
- Rejoice in knowing what God's stewards do now can have lasting benefits.

The first positive implication urges us to reflect on the eternal dimensions that are inherent in all the decisions we make, especially in regard to the use and management of money and possessions. Maturing stewards make good decisions when it comes to the support of the work of God's kingdom while they are alive and after the Lord has called them home.

The second positive implication urges us to pursue good planning for the present and future as part of our stewardship. There are only a few things we can do with money. We can earn it, give it, spend it, invest it and bequeath it. As maturing stewards we strive to keep our spiritual balance when we deal with money and possessions. "Do we possess our possessions or do our possessions possess us?" is a question worth asking and answering from time to time.

Maturing stewards who have developed good gift and estate plans find a great deal of joy in knowing that what they do can have lasting benefits. That's the thrust of the third positive implication.

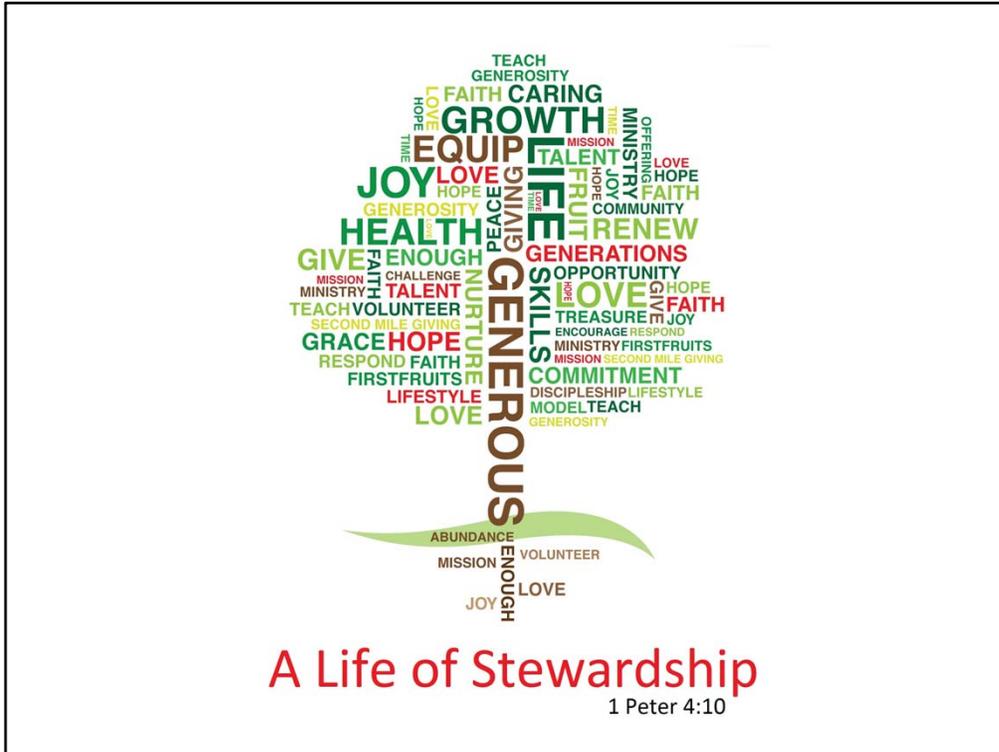
**VIII. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN  
AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF  
TIME AND ETERNITY**

**How is this done?**

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, **we will not:**

- Be so intent on the here and now that the possibilities for extending the kingdom after death are neglected; or,
- Be so intent on plans for the future that the possibilities for extending the kingdom here and now are neglected

The two negative implications bring us back to where we began. Maturing stewards do the right things for the right reasons and thus seek a Godly balance in light of the present and the future, of time and eternity.



You may very well want to offer financial planning workshops as a follow up to this study to help people budget so they spend wisely, give generously, invest carefully and develop the gift plan that God has put into the hearts of all His people.