

The Stewardship Toolkit

Sample Packet

Thank you for downloading *The Stewardship Toolkit* sample packet. *The Stewardship Toolkit* contains a wide variety of material downloadable each month. The samples comprise:

- † **Generous Reflections – one week sample (4 or 5 provided each month)**
- † **eStewardship Thoughts – one week sample (4 or 5 provided each month)**
- † **Youth Stewardship Education**
 - **“Calling All Kids” (K-6) – one month sample handout**
 - **“Young Stewards’ Corner” (7-12) – one month sample handout**
- † **Adult Stewardship Education – each of 2 monthly handouts**
 - **Devotional Meditation– one month sample handout**
 - **“Money Matters” series – one month sample handout**
- † **Letters from the Pastor – single example**
- † **Bible Studies – first page only (including the first page of answer guide)**
- † **Stewardship Sermons – first page only.**

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Bulletin or Website Blurbs

Generous Reflections

Generous Reflections

Many situations in life require mediators. Two parties at odds with each other can be brought together by one who is skilled in helping each one see things from the other's point of view. Christ was just such a mediator. Sin had separated us from God. A great chasm lay between us. The just and holy God could not tolerate sin and we helpless humans could not keep from it. Thanks be to God for giving his Son to bring about reconciliation between us and our heavenly Father!

Reprint
For
Review
Only

eStewardship Thoughts

Options for sending emails:

- ✠ Highlight, copy and paste each message into the body of an email.
- ✠ Highlight, copy and paste each into a file and attach to an email.
- ✠ Scan each eStewardship Thought separately and place in a file to send.

Wednesday's Wisdom

Overcoming Our Self-centeredness

Who among us likes sacrifice? Do we not seek to please ourselves, to spare ourselves, to shield ourselves and those we love from pain or disappointment or failure? Unlike us, *“Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things . . . Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.”* Peter loved his Lord; He didn't want him to suffer. Our answer to the temptation to self-centeredness should echo Jesus' answer to Peter, *“Get behind Me, Satan . . . You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men”* (Matthew 16:21-23).



Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, I know that I sin greatly and that, indeed, I am sinful. My sin lies so deep within me that often I don't even know it or realize how it estranges me from you. Search me and show me my sin, that I might repent and be restored to fellowship with you through the blood of Jesus who has atoned for my sin. In his name. **Amen.**

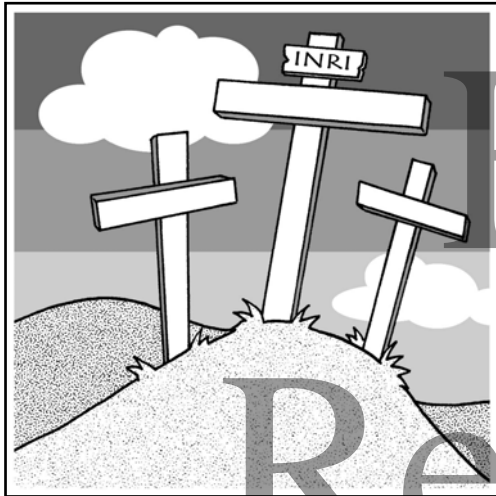
Blessing on your stewardship journey!

Calling all Kids!

Grades K-6

Dear Sunday School Student,

Around this time of year, when you go to church you'll hear your pastors talking about Lent. Lent is a season just before Easter when we read in the Bible about how Jesus suffered and was actually crucified on a cross for us. You'll hear about how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the night that Judas betrayed him, and you'll also hear about Peter. Peter was one of Jesus' disciples, and he was a strong brave man. He was sure that nothing would keep him from being Jesus' friend – even if he had to die himself. Jesus had told his disciples that he would have to die and that they would be afraid and run away, but Peter said, *“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you”* (Matthew 26:35).



In fact, when Judas came with the soldiers to take Jesus away, Peter did stand up for Jesus. He took out a sword and cut the ear off one of the soldiers (John 18:10)! Later, though, he wasn't quite as brave. He was waiting outside the place where Jesus was being questioned and beaten. Someone asked him if he wasn't one of Jesus' disciples and he said, "Not me!" Not just once but three times he said, "Not me!" He even said, *“I don't know this man you're talking about”* (Mark 14:71).

Jesus had told Peter that this would happen. When Peter realized what he had done, the Bible says *“he went outside and wept bitterly”* (Luke 22:62). Peter was sorry for his sins, and we learn later that Jesus forgave

him.

Sometimes we're like Peter. We think we can keep from sinning, but we find out we can't. The good news for us is that, just like Peter, we are sorry for our sins and Jesus always forgives us. After Jesus rose from the dead and went to Heaven, Peter became a great preacher. He became even braver than he had been before, because God gave him courage. God can use us, too, even though we have sinned and still are sinners. The Bible tells us that when we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us and make us clean from sin (1 John 1:9). Then we can go on doing good things for God.

Think about it:

1. Ask someone to read Mark 16:6-7 with you. How do we know that Peter was forgiven?
2. Ask someone to read Acts 4:13-20 with you. How was Peter brave?
3. Ask someone to read John 21:15-17 with you. How did Peter continue to do God's work?

Let's pray: Dear Jesus, forgive me when I sin – especially when I don't speak or act as if I know you. Thank you. Help me to do your work as I study in school, spend time with my friends, and live in my home. **Amen.**

Young Stewards' Corner

Grades 7-12

Dear Sunday School Student,

We're in the season of the Church year called Lent. This is the penitential forty-day period when we focus on our sin and Christ's suffering and death for our sin. It was God's plan from before the beginning of time that Jesus should pay the penalty for our sin. One man who was front and center during the time when this plan unfolded was included in the group of three disciples who were perhaps closer to Jesus than the others – the Apostle Peter.

Peter was a courageous man. Many times he braved the unpredictable waters of the Sea of Galilee as a fisherman. When Jesus told his disciples about his impending death and that they would all run away, it was Peter who insisted, *"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."* When Jesus told Peter how he would actually react when the time came, Peter still declared, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you"* (Matthew 26:33, 35). When the soldiers came to the Garden to take Jesus away, it was Peter who cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (John 18:10).

So far, so good, but we know what happened in the courtyard during Jesus' illegal trial, don't we? What had Jesus predicted? *"This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times"* (Matthew 26:34). When you read about Peter's behavior in the courtyard that night, it almost seems as if he doesn't realize he's fulfilling Jesus' words. Then, *"The rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him . . . and he went outside and wept bitterly"* (Luke 22:60-62).

Peter failed. Peter sinned. So do we. We may have the best intentions just as Peter did, but we fail. What then? Peter wept bitterly. He wept over his sin. He wept over his betrayal of the one he loved more than any other. Sorrow and contrition filled his heart and mind. And Jesus, who knows our hearts, who is faithful and just (1 John 1:9), forgave his sin. So it is with us. Therefore, Lent, although a somber time, is also a time of joy, for we know what's ahead.

Let's think about it:

1. Read the Gospel accounts about Peter's denial (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27).
2. How can we know that Peter was forgiven? (See Mark 16:6-7; John 21:15-17).



Let's Pray: Lord, how often I have held a grudge against someone for some small offense. I know I sin against you in many and great ways, yet you always forgive me and welcome me back. Thank you. Keep me strong against temptation so that I may serve you. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Devotional Meditation

Scripture Reading: *“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 no destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).*



Becoming Rich

Through the working of the Holy Spirit, Christians understand that riches do not consist of money. In fact, riches have nothing to do with money. We can have very little money and be very rich or be very wealthy and be impoverished. True riches have to do with a right relationship with Jesus who brings us happiness, satisfaction, joy, love and peace. Material possessions do not constitute real riches.

Material things are transitory. What we possess materially is subject to loss in a variety of ways. Our wealth can be lost in the stock market or through rust, obsolescence, and thievery. No matter how much money we may have, we have no way of guaranteeing that it can be kept safe and secure. Money can be lost, stolen, or its purchasing power lost through inflation. Investments can decline in value and businesses can fail. Our property can be burned or robbed. All material things can be gone quickly. Even if our material things stay with us, we will eventually leave them, because, at the end, we can take nothing with us.

So, if we want to be rich, it cannot be on the basis of material things. Things of this world are much too precarious a foundation on which to build a life. If we are to be rich, we have to turn away from material things and turn toward Christ. In our Scripture reading, Jesus tells us to *“store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”* If we want to get really rich, we have to start storing up riches in heaven.

In order for us to store up treasures in heaven, we first need to love God with all of our heart, soul, and strength and love our neighbors as ourselves. To store up treasures in heaven, we need to loosen our grip on things of this world. We need to learn to be content with what we have rather than always wanting more worldly things.

Through faith, we are rich. As Christians, we receive the riches of eternal life with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Discussion Thoughts:

1. Why do people worry so much about not having enough money?
2. Why don't material things provide lasting happiness?
3. Why is it important to remember that the only thing that we take to heaven is ourselves?

Prayer:

Lord, you are the provider and controller of all things. Help us to put our trust and faith in you rather than in worldly things. We thank you for your wonderful love that was shown through your Son, Jesus. In your precious name, we pray. **Amen.**

Money Matters

Personal Financial Stewardship

God Blesses Us for our Giving

By faith, we understand that the best investment we can make with our money is investing or giving it to God. Throughout Scripture, when a command to give is stated, along with that command is a reference to the blessings that the giver will enjoy. These blessings come in many forms. For example in Proverbs 11:25, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." In Proverbs 19:17 Solomon tells us: "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and [God] will reward him for what he has done." God has ordained that, when we give generously, we receive generously.



As Christians, we should give without expectation of receiving anything in return. However, our gracious God, who loves us so much, thrills to bless us. He has put within us the joy of giving and finding reward in another's pleasure.

Through Malachi, the Lord offers a double blessing to those who will be obedient in bringing their tithes to the temple. He promises to reward them materially through plentiful harvests. He promises that, if they will honor him with their tithes, he will prosper them beyond their dreams. Their crops will produce abundantly, and none of their fruit will spoil on the vine. The second part of the blessing is that surrounding nations will see this and realize the special protection that God gives them. "Test me in this," God said. Are you willing to test God with your earnings? Are you willing to bring your tithes to your church before you pay your bills? Are you worried about the mortgage, the clothes, the groceries, and the transportation? Jesus said, ". . . do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear . . . your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:25, 32-33). Test him!



"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Are you willing to sow generously? You are free to sow generously and then to receive God's promise that you will also reap generously. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38). It is inevitable that, when you give, you will receive, for that is the way our giving heavenly Father

has planned it. *Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do . . . to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:1-2). God pours out spiritual blessings on us when we least expect them. When you are giving out of a desire to obey God's command and to help others, you will find blessings heaped up and running over. These are blessings not understood by those outside the faith.*

Letter from the Pastor

An Easter Letter

Dear Member,

Greetings to you in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus!

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate and rejoice in the resurrection from the dead of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. On our behalf, Jesus willingly went to the cross to redeem us from sin and death. *“Greater love has no one than this shown that he lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). With the suffering and agony of the crucifixion, Jesus has *“destroyed the devil’s work”* (1 John 3:8). In his resurrection, he has given us victory over sin and death. Alleluia, he is Risen!

As we consider all that the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross of Calvary and in his resurrection, we are compelled to love, honor, and serve him. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“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”* (2 Corinthians 5:15). In the words of Martin Luther, “Christ has redeemed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil in order that I might be his own and serve him.” As stewards, we respond to the love shown on Calvary because “love so amazing, so divine—demands my soul, my life, my all.”

For your consideration, an envelope is enclosed for a special Easter offering. When we give faithfully of our time, talents, and treasures, we demonstrate our love for our heavenly Father. *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8).

I hope to see you on Easter Sunday as we praise Jesus for our salvation. Alleluia, he is risen indeed!

In his love,

Pastor _____

Bible Study

Growing as Stewards: Part 2

Stewardship is a way of life. It is all that we are and have and hope to be. Christian stewardship is what we do to live out our commitment to Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, you have made us and saved us. You have called us to be your stewards on our journey through this life. Give us joy and enthusiasm as we carry out this responsibility. Teach us to rely on your strength to carry us through discouraging times and to give you thanks for times of success. **In Jesus' name. Amen.**

The Old Testament and Stewardship

1. What is the basic premise of stewardship?
 - a. Genesis 1:1
 - b. Psalm 24:1
 - c. Psalm 95:4-5

2. How did Old Testament believers respond to God's gifts?

#	Scripture	Person	Response
a.	Genesis 8:20-22		
b.	1 Chronicles 29:10-18		
c.	Nehemiah 10:35-37		

3. What did the Law require concerning financial giving?
 - a. Leviticus 27:30
 - b. Deuteronomy 12:6

Willingly and in faith, these Old Testament believers fulfilled the requirements of the Law by bringing their tithes and offerings before the Lord. Often the amount of their gifts exceeded the Law's requirements. (See Exodus 36:4-7.)

4. Old Testament prophets addressed the issue of the heart as the seat of stewardship as well as the act of stewardship.
 - a. Hosea 6:6
 - b. Micah 6:6-8

Jesus, the Bridge between the Old and New Testaments

The tithe was the Law of the Old Testament.

5. What did Jesus say about the law of the tithe in Matthew 5:17?

6. Jesus also agreed with Micah and Hosea. What did he say according to Matthew 23:23?

Bible Study Answer Guide

Growing as Stewards: Part 2

1.
 - a. Genesis 1:1 – God is the creator of the heavens and the earth.
 - b. Psalm 24:1 – The earth and everything in it, including all people, belongs to the Lord.
 - c. Psalm 95 :4-5 – God holds the whole earth in his hands. The highest mountains belong to him. Because God made the sea, that belongs to him also.

#	Scripture	Person (s)	Response
2a.	Exodus 36:3-7	Israelites	Brought so many gifts for the building of the temple, they had to be restrained.
2b.	1 Chronicles 29:10-18	David	Praised God as owner of all creation and the giver of all wealth and honor .
2c.	Nehemiah 10:35-37	Israelites	Took responsibility for bringing firstfruits of crops and firstborn of children.

3.
 - a. Leviticus 27:30 – The Law required that a tithe of everything be brought to God.
 - b. Deuteronomy 12:6 – Old Testament believers were to bring their burnt offerings and sacrifices, their tithes and special gifts, their freewill offerings, and the firstborn of their animals.
4.
 - a. Hosea 6 :6 – God said that he is more pleased with mercy and acknowledgement of Himself more than sacrifices.
 - b. Micah 6:6-8 – The prophet names all the things he could bring to God to please Him, but concludes that what is pleasing to God is that we “act justly” “love mercy,” and “walk humbly with . . . God.”
5. Matthew 5:17 – Jesus said that he came to fulfill the Law which included the command to tithe.
6. Matthew 23:23 – Jesus condemned the Pharisees because, although they tithed, they neglected to practice justice, mercy, or faithfulness. He said they should have done both.

A resource to help you in your preaching ministry.

1 Timothy 6: 6-21: *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For 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. 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.” (Selected verses)*

“HOW CAN I BE CONTENT?”

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen!

In answer to the question, “How can I be content?” most of us might respond in pretty much the same way. We might say something like, “If I were happy, I’d be content,” or “If I were rich,” or “If I were successful.” Some of us might even say, “If I were useful and needed I’d be content.”

Contentment is elusive, but the Apostle Paul said he had learned to be content no matter what his situation. If he had abundance, if he were in want, it really didn’t matter - he was content. I’m not there yet, are you?

We live in a society in which the neighbors and the advertisers on television and in magazines tell us we can’t be happy or content until we drive a certain car, have the latest appliance, live in a certain house, or look a certain way.

How, then, can we be content? Paul, in his inspired letter to Timothy, sought to tell us how we can be content. First of all, he said, trust in the right things. Secondly, claim the gift of contentment. Lastly, be rich in the things of God.

Paul said that we can find contentment as we trust in the right things. It’s also true, then, that we dare not trust in the wrong things. We dare not trust in temporary, earthly things, things like wealth or riches which Paul said are so uncertain. However, many people do trust in wealth. Have you ever noticed the long lines of people waiting to buy lottery tickets? Along with every discarded stub go the hopes of those who thought that they could strike it big, those who thought that a million dollar jackpot would bring contentment. What about those who have had that winning ticket? We’ve read the dismal accounts of those who, having obtained all that wealth, have not obtained contentment, but more trial! Paul says it’s not that easy, that’s not what it takes to be content.

Paul warned us not to trust in temporary things. Don’t trust in wealth. One time Jesus spoke about a person who trusted in his barns and his farmland and the produce from that land. Jesus called that man a fool, because he was wealthy in one area and did not know the true riches of God and his love.