

parish

Excel in the Grace of Giving!

Three-week Stewardship Program



“But just as you excel in everything ... in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us ... see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7).

***Program Instructions
and Timeline***

Program Description

Excel in the Grace of Giving! is a 3-week stewardship program designed to be an integral part of your stewardship plan. It will create a positive atmosphere in which to focus on commitment of your members. We recommend that it be accompanied by monthly communication and inspiration about stewardship throughout the year, such as a bulletin or newsletter insert. This will provide a consistent, meaningful backdrop to conveying the stewardship theme.

Program Material Files

The program material files contain all of the materials required to undertake a successful program: newsletter articles, bulletin messages and inserts, email messages, lay reader presentations, sermons, children's messages, letters from the pastor, giving charts and a commitment form. These materials are available at the *Parish Resource Center* (<http://www.parishpublishing.org/resourcecenter>), placed in separate files making them easy to find and use. Simply download the material to your computer and you can edit or change any material, if desired.

Keep your log on information handy: Username _____ Password _____

The following materials are included:

- † Program Instructions
- † Background photo
- † Newsletter articles (2)
- † Bulletin messages (5)
- † Email messages (4)
- † Letter from pastor to accompany Commitment Form
- † Letter from pastor regarding "Give Plus One Challenge"
- † Letter from pastor to those not returning a Commitment Form
- † Letter from pastor to thank members who turned in a Commitment Form
- † Give Plus One Challenge worksheet
- † Giving Chart
- † Bible study answer guide
- † Commitment Form

Materials for each week of the program:

- † Bulletin insert
- † Children's message
- † Lay reader presentation
- † Worship suggestions
- † Bible study (including Bible study answer guide.)
- † Sermon

Tri-fold Program Brochures

There are three tri-fold brochures that are an important part of this program; excellent tools to help educate your members about the stewardship of giving and the blessings we receive

through giving. They should be placed in the bulletins or handed out as worshippers enter the sanctuary. The tri-fold brochures, purchased separately, provide a meaningful message, while remaining brief enough to be read quickly by busy people.

Order tri-fold brochures in advance of the program and use them in the following order:

- † “Excel in the Grace of Giving” To accompany commitment form and pastor’s letter.
- † “Giving from the Heart” Second Week
- † “God Blesses Faithful Givers” Third Week

Give Plus One Challenge

During the second week of the program, members will be introduced to a “Give Plus One Challenge.” This challenge asks members to prayerfully consider taking a leap of faith in their giving, by giving one percent more of their incomes than they currently give. A “Giving Chart” and a “Give Plus One Challenge” worksheet are available in the program material files. If you want to do a mailing regarding this challenge, a letter to enclose with them is also included.

Bible Studies

In order to **excel in the grace of giving**, it is essential to be in God’s Word. There are three Bible studies included for each week of this program. The Bible studies are filled with many excellent discussion questions and will deepen the spiritual basis for giving.

Provide Year-round Inspiration

It is important to maintain a consistent communication and inspiration about stewardship throughout the year. We recommend using a monthly bulletin insert on stewardship, available separately from Parish Publishing.

Program Suggestions

- † The tri-fold brochures serve an important part in the program. To help launch the program, send a tri-fold brochure along with pastor’s letter and the commitment form. The tri-fold brochures for each week should be placed in the bulletins or handed out as worshippers enter the sanctuary.
- † Use the program background photo when publishing bulletin or newsletter messages, either behind the text or as cover art.
- † We encourage you to ask some people to share their testimonies regarding their lives as stewards to augment or replace the included lay reader presentations. If there are no volunteers, use the lay reader presentations that are available for each Sunday.
- † The “Give Plus One Challenge” letter and mailing is optional. The challenge is introduced on the second Sunday. Be mindful that the “Give Plus One Challenge” encourages a one percent giving increase of people’s incomes, not a one percent increase of their current offering.
- † Emphasize the importance of attending the Bible studies. In order for people to grow and excel in the grace of giving, they need to be reading and studying God’s Word.
- † This program can be offered any time during the year.
- † Make Commitment Sunday a special day. Offer refreshments. Have balloons. Make it a day of celebration as people offer their commitments to the Lord. Make it an exciting and memorable day.

Program Time Line

We recommend providing monthly stewardship bulletin or newsletter inserts in order to maintain consistent inspiration and communication throughout the entire year.

Preceding the three stewardship Sundays

Bible studies	Schedule Bible study groups, or church-wide sessions. Email the Bible studies to those people attending.
Lay reader presentation	Identify and schedule lay readers.
Newsletter articles: “Excel in the Grace of Giving” “Giving: an Obligation or Opportunity?”	Publish one month preceding the program. Publish during the program.
Order the tri-fold brochures.	
Schedule Bible study meetings.	
First mailing: Letter from the Pastor Tri-fold “Excel in the Grace of Giving” Commitment Form	Mail to households so they are received just before the beginning of the program.
Bulletin Messages	Publish one message in the bulletin prior to the three Sunday program. Then, one for each Sunday.
Email Messages	Send email preceding program.
“Give Plus One Challenge” letter	This letter is optional. It informs people about the “Give Plus One Challenge” introduced the second Sunday.

During the three stewardship Sundays

First Sunday	Publish bulletin insert. Lay reader presentation: “Who Owns You?” Teach children’s message “Mine” Use worship suggestions. Preach sermon: “Overcoming Greed” Send email for first week. Host Bible study session during week.
Second Sunday	Hand out tri-fold brochure “Giving from the Heart” Publish bulletin insert. Lay reader presentation: “Give Plus One Challenge” <i>Distribute “Giving Chart” and “Give Plus One Challenge” worksheet (optional).</i> Teach children’s message “Toys” Use worship suggestions. Preach sermon: “More Blessed to Give” Send email for second week. Host Bible study session during week.

Third Sunday

Hand out tri-fold brochure: "God Blesses Faithful Givers"
Publish bulletin insert.
Lay reader presentation: "Spiritual Rewards"
Teach children's message "Poor Widow"
Use worship suggestions.
Preach sermon: "Receiving through Giving"
Host Bible study session during week.

Invite your members to place their commitment forms
on the altar. Have extra forms available.
Send email third week at end of week or after program.

After the three stewardship Sundays

Letter to those

not returning a commitment form:

Send reminder letters to those who failed to return their
commitment form.

Letter to those

who turned in a commitment form:

Send thank-you letters to those who turned in
commitment forms.

Email message and bulletin message:

Thank-you to people for their generosity.

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Excel in the Grace of Giving

Bulletin Insert - Third Sunday

God's Blessings through Giving

Every command God gives us is for our good, for the building up of the church, and for the honor and glory of his name. God's command to give, to share with others the resources with which he has blessed us, follows the pattern of command linked to blessing. Throughout Scripture, when a command to give is stated, along with that command is a reference to the rewards that the giver will enjoy. These blessings come in many forms. Some verses that promise blessing:

“Honor the Lord with your firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing . . .” (Proverbs 3:9).

“A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25).

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

“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).

As God's people, we don't give to receive, but God has ordained that through our giving we are blessed.



Dear Member,

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

This year's stewardship program theme, "Excel in the Grace of Giving," is Scripturally-based. In the Apostle's Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, he wrote:

"But just as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Paul is seeking the generosity of the people in Corinth for the distressed Christians in Jerusalem. Just as Paul urged them, we are urged to **excel in the grace of giving**.

God calls and equips his people to be generous. As you seek to follow God's admonition to **excel in the grace of giving**, you are encouraged to take part in the "Give Plus One Challenge." The "Give Plus One Challenge" encourages giving to God through your church one percent more of your income than you are currently giving. For Christians, giving is not an option. God wants us to be faithful and generous in our giving. God demonstrated his love for us by giving us his son. We, in response, express our gratitude to God for who he is and what he has done and continues to do for us by our willing and generous giving. God is honored, and we begin to **excel in the grace of giving** when we give the first part of our incomes faithfully, regularly, and generously to him through our church and other Christian ministries.

As you try, by God's grace, to be faithful to God's admonition to **excel in the grace of giving**, you may want to try giving one percent more of your income. For example, those who are currently giving three percent of their incomes will give four percent, etc.. It may not be easy to increase the amount you give, and, for some, it won't be possible. However, with God's help many of us can take a leap of faith in our giving and give more.

To help with your calculations, a "Giving Chart" and a "Give Plus One Challenge" worksheet are provided. On Sunday, you will hear more about the "Give Plus One Challenge."

May God richly bless you as you faithfully manage all that our Lord has entrusted to you.

In his love,

Pastor

Only

Excel in the Grace of Giving

Sermon - Second Sunday

“More Blessed to Give”

Text: Acts 20:35 *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, you have shown us what giving is all about. You gave your only son so that He might give us eternal life. You give us all we need and beyond. The words of David the Psalmist say it all: *“You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing”* (Psalm 145:16). We ask that your Holy Spirit might work in our hearts during the hearing of this message that we will learn gratitude for your gifts and the desire to emulate your giving. Now sanctify us by the truth; your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father who first gave to us so we can **excel in the grace of giving** and from our Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for us, his fellow-stewards of God’s gifts. Today is the second Sunday in our series **“Excel in the Grace of Giving.”** Let us begin by thinking on the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

A custom which has become a part of today's society started with a small China cup sitting on the counter of a butcher shop in England in the mid-1500's. On the cup were printed in capital letters the initials T.I.P.S., the abbreviation for the words “To insure prompt service”. The obvious message was that, if you wanted to be waited on before others who were also waiting in line, you made a contribution in the cup to assure prompt attention and service.

For those who lived during the Depression of the 30's when people could scarcely afford food, let alone tips, and for those who have witnessed the gradual increase in the amount of tips expected from five to ten percent, from ten to 15 percent, and now 20 percent in most places, the original meaning of tips to reward prompt, efficient, and courteous service has been obscured by the modern custom of having the gratuity already attached to the check, regardless of the kind of service you received!

We regularly compute, down to the penny, the expected tip to leave on the table for a waiter or waitress who spends less time than two minutes writing down our orders, serving our food, filling our water glasses or coffee cups, and bringing our checks – someone we have probably never met, do not know, have never even seen before and will seldom, if ever, see again – but we would be ashamed of ourselves and feel cheap if we did not tip the customary 15 to 20 percent for a total stranger! Yet, we would wince at the painful thought of contributing the same percentage of our income to our God who gives it all to us in the first place!

Fortunately, our God doesn't give in percentages! Only 20 percent of his sunshine, 30 percent of the air we breathe, 40 percent of our daily bread, and only 50 percent of his love! God continues to

Excel in the Grace of Giving

Worship Suggestions – Second Sunday

Hymns

“Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty”

“Take My Life, O Lord, Renew”

“Sing to the Lord of Harvest”

(It is suggested that members of the congregations place their commitment forms on the altar. You may want to consider singing “Lift High the Cross” as people are going forward).

Readings

Lesson: Genesis 22:1-19

Epistle: Galatians 6:7-10

Gospel: Luke 6:37-42

Litany

Leader: Lord, from you all things have their source.

People: Thank you, Lord, for making us your stewards. Grant us faith to be good stewards.

Leader: Lord, help us to truly understand that we are simply managers, not owners, of what you entrust to us.

People: Help us, Lord, to live our lives knowing that we have been blessed so we can be a blessing to others.

Leader: Lord, prevent us from being so preoccupied with ourselves and things of this world.

People: Please change us, Lord, from selfish and greedy people to people who give freely so we can **excel in the grace of giving.**

Leader: Lord, help us to become conduits of your love, kindness, and mercy to others.

All: We pray, Lord, that you will loosen our grip on our time and money so we will give generously to those in need. **Amen.**

“Excel in the Grace of Giving”

“But just as you excel in everything ... in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us ... see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7).

“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income...” (1 Cor. 16:2)

Percentage Giving (Proportionate)

(Expressed in \$ commitment per week)

Annual Income	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10% Tithe	11%	12%
\$ 15,000	2.88	5.77	8.65	11.54	14.42	17.31	20.19	23.08	25.96	28.85	31.73	34.62
\$ 20,000	3.85	7.69	11.54	15.38	19.23	23.08	26.92	30.77	34.62	38.46	42.31	46.15
\$ 25,000	4.81	9.62	14.42	19.23	24.04	28.85	33.65	38.46	43.27	48.08	52.880	57.69
\$ 30,000	5.77	11.52	17.31	23.08	28.85	34.62	40.38	46.15	51.92	57.69	63.46	69.23
\$ 35,000	6.73	13.46	20.19	26.92	33.65	40.38	47.12	53.85	60.58	67.31	74.04	80.77
\$ 40,000	7.69	15.38	23.08	30.77	38.46	46.15	53.85	61.54	69.23	76.92	84.62	92.31
\$ 45,000	8.65	17.31	25.96	34.62	43.27	51.92	60.58	69.23	77.88	86.54	95.19	103.85
\$ 50,000	9.62	19.23	28.85	38.46	48.08	57.69	67.31	76.92	86.54	96.15	105.77	115.38
\$ 55,000	10.58	21.15	31.73	42.31	52.88	63.46	74.04	84.62	95.19	105.77	116.35	126.92
\$ 60,000	11.54	23.08	34.62	46.15	57.69	69.23	80.77	92.31	103.85	115.38	126.92	138.46
\$ 70,000	13.46	26.92	40.38	53.85	67.31	80.77	94.23	107.69	121.15	134.62	148.08	161.54
\$ 80,000	15.38	30.77	46.15	61.54	76.92	92.31	107.69	123.08	138.46	153.85	169.23	184.62
\$ 90,000	17.31	34.62	51.92	69.23	86.54	103.85	121.15	138.46	155.77	173.08	190.38	207.69
\$ 100,000	19.23	38.46	57.69	76.92	96.15	115.38	134.62	153.85	173.08	192.30	211.54	230.77