


# Stewardship



Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

*Fulfilling God's Purpose!*

**Bible Studies**

## *Fulfilling God's Purpose!* Bible Study

### *Building Relationships*

**Prayer:** Dear good and gracious heavenly Father, we give you humble and heartfelt thanks for the grace and love you lavish upon us. By the power of your Holy Spirit, let us reflect your presence in our lives through the lifestyles we live. Thank you for calling us into relationship with you, a relationship that sustains us in faith, equips us for service, and empowers us to love others as you love us. Open our minds to receive through this study the blessings you have for us to nurture us in faith and love toward you. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

**Theme verses:** *"Let love and faithfulness never leave you, bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man"* (Proverbs 3:3-4).

#### **Introduction**

The title of this study presupposes the need for building relationships. In other words, relationships don't just happen. Even in families where blood relationships exist, spiritual, emotional relationships must be built. How do we go about doing that? What are the criteria for such a construction? Let's look to the master of relationships: our Lord Jesus.

Jesus, the incarnate Christ, lived in a relationship with his earthly family. The Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and John say nothing at all on this subject, and, although Luke's remarks are brief, they are worthy of pondering. When his parents became separated from their son on the return from Jerusalem where they had attended the Feast of the Passover, they were distraught. When they were reunited, Mary asked, *"Son, why have you treated us like this?"* He gave his well-known reply: *"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"* Then, we're told, *"He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them . . . And [he] grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"* (Luke 2:48-52). The Son of God, the Savior of the World, lived in obedient relationship with the earthly parents his heavenly Father gave him.





him (Matthew 28:18-20). He has authority to issue this command. **“THEREFORE GO!”** Don’t keep this miracle a secret. Take time to tell it to your neighbors and friends. Use your talents to build up your church so that its mission and ministry might be enhanced. Spend your resources so that others (if not you yourself) are enabled to be his witnesses to *“all nations.”*

## Sharing the Good News

God’s plan for his people has always been that we take responsibility for sharing the Good News. Peter wrote, *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”* (1 Peter 3:15). God blesses us with minds to learn and mouths to speak. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God will give us the words and the courage to use them. Along with most people, we are eager to talk about the weather, sports, economy, or politics, but, as Christians, we have been given the treasure of the Gospel message—something vastly more important to talk about. Our attitude should be like that of Peter and John, who, when commanded to stop speaking of Christ, said, *“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:20).

In “witnessing for Jesus,” we want people to know there is a God who cares for us and is almighty and powerful, yet loving and compassionate. Like kids bragging about their dads, we can talk about our wonderful, almighty loving Father, who, while we were still sinners, sent us a Savior to redeem us from our slavery to sin (Romans 5:8). This is the God, who, at just the right time, *“sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons”* (Galatians 4:4-5).



Through Christ, we know the Father.  
Through Christ, the Father has come to us.

Through Christ, we have life everlasting in Heaven. This is the Good News that we as stewards of the Gospel want to share. May God give us courage to use the opportunities he gives us.

## Go Quickly and Tell

We have a mental picture of the women going to the grave that first Easter morning to anoint the body of Jesus. It is barely light, and perhaps they are speaking in soft voices. Certainly there is an air of solemnity, of sadness, for their Master is dead. Their hopes are gone.

Then we see them before the open tomb, bewildered, then fearful, as they see an angel with *“appearance like lightning and . . . clothes . . . white as snow.”* The angel’s first words are *“Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. he is not here; he has risen, just as he said”* (Matthew 28:2-6).

Perhaps some of us, too, have been bewildered, afraid. Even though we have always known the whole story – even though we look back on the Resurrection – we have been bewildered and

When we are asked to serve or help within the church, we may even borrow some of Moses' excuses, such as, "I'm too busy," "I'm not experienced," "I'm too old," "I'm too young," "I'm not good enough," "I could never do that," or "Someone else is more capable than I am." God has given us abilities to be used in service for others. In the Parable of the Talents found in the 25th chapter of Matthew, the Master, God, entrusts three servants with different amounts of talents. They were given different amounts of talents, but the Master expected all three servants to use those talents faithfully. The parable relates to money, but the same truth applies to all the gifts God gives us as stewards in his kingdom. We are accountable for the way we use our time and energies to serve just as we are accountable for how we use our money (Matthew 25:14-30). *"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much will be asked"* (Luke 12:48).

God has blessed us with gifts and abilities, but the decision to use those gifts for the work of the Lord or just for ourselves is ours. We are encouraged by Peter to use our gifts to serve others. *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"* (1 Peter 4:10). We need to ask the Holy Spirit daily to empower us so we faithfully use our God-given gifts for God's Kingdom. With God's help we will find ways our time and abilities can make a difference and we will each hear God's words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant!"* (Matthew 25:23).

### Questions for Discussion:

5. Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. What acts of service did the Good Samaritan provide? What made his service especially noteworthy? (See also Luke 17:11-19 and John 4:7-9).
6. What characteristics of a servant did the Good Samaritan exhibit? Jesus?
7. What does 1 Peter 4:10 say about your need to be in service? Identify its three parts.
8. How does Mark 12:30-31 motivate you to serve?
9. How would you contrast true service with self-serving service?
10. In which service activities are you currently involved? What service is God prompting you to do? Is there someone you know who God wants you to serve regularly and consistently?

### Prayer

Lord, help us to be humble, compassionate, and available as we practice "living as servants." Help us to use our time, talents, and treasures to extend your kingdom and to serve those in need. Use us as your instruments of love, mercy, and grace. In your precious name we pray. **Amen.**

3. How does giving test the sincerity of your love (2 Corinthians 8:8)?
4. Is giving an obligation or an opportunity for you? How has your attitude changed in the past few years?

### **True Motivation for Giving**

The announcement is made that a family has lost its home to a fire. All their belongings are gone – the furniture and appliances along with the photographs and scrapbooks. People eagerly open their wallets, “giving joyfully and generously” and often beyond their ability in order to provide for the needs of this family. This is indeed what Christ would have us do. Scripture is full of admonitions to give to those in need (See James 2:14-17 and 1 John 3:17-18).

Unfortunately, these same givers can be very frugal with their weekly offerings. They are “need givers” rather than “love givers.” When need is our motivation for giving, we may actually limit ourselves in our giving, because, once we perceive that the need has been met, we restrict our giving.

God, who does not need our gifts, still asks us to give them. He tells us, “*I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills*” (Psalm 50:9-10). He doesn’t ask us to give because he needs our money. He asks us to give our gifts in response to who he is and what he has done and continues to do for us. Why? It is for our sakes so that we might experience the joy and fulfillment of giving.

First Corinthians 16:2 urges us to give regularly, proportionately, and of our firstfruits. When love for God becomes the motivating force behind our giving, we will find ourselves following that exhortation joyfully, freely, cheerfully. Week after week, we will give our offerings, writing out that check before we pay our bills.

Love motivated the Poor Widow, in Luke 21:1-4, to give her last two coins to Jesus. She gave from her heart rather than to a need. Even though the widow gave only a small gift, Jesus praised her for her generosity. For Christians, giving is not an option. Love compels us to give which fulfills God’s exhortations to give.

### **Testimony through Giving**

God’s Word promises that, as we give faithfully and cheerfully to the Lord, he will give us eternal blessings. Jesus said, “*Give, and it will be given to you . . . For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you*” (Luke 6:38). In addition to the joy we receive through our giving, God can use our giving as an encouragement for others to give. When others give, they will also receive God’s special blessing, which comes from honoring him with their lives and resources. For the most part, our giving is a private matter between the Lord and us. However, there are times and occasions when it is proper for God’s people to share with others how God has worked in their lives to enable their generosity and the blessings they receive through their giving.



Such testimonies can encourage others to grow in their giving as they begin to trust in and depend on the Lord.

A giving testimony can have the same effect that a pebble has when it is thrown into a quiet pond of water. After the splash, waves emanate from the pebble's initial point of impact. Similarly, a giving testimony can have an immediate impact upon the hearts and minds of those who hear, and, and like the waves that move outward through the water, the giving testimony can also have a far-reaching effect on the attitudes of other believers toward their financial stewardship, causing those who hear that message to act upon the Spirit's prompting to do likewise. It's easy to see how the gifts and testimony of one person can encourage a generous spirit in many others when the person who gives the gift does not bring honor to himself, but gives the glory to God.

In Scripture, we see how God has used the testimony of people faithful in their giving to encourage the giving of others. In the book of Acts, we read of Barnabas' gift of property. *"Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet"* (Act 4:36-37). His gift was an encouragement for others to give. Among the believers, none lacked food or shelter, because those with surpluses were encouraged to share with those in need. Our giving can be a witness to our families, church, and, potentially, to our neighborhoods. People will pay more attention to what we do with our money than with many other areas of our lives. May God grant us his grace to give, so that our giving can be a testimony of our faith.


### Questions for Discussion:

5. What is likely to happen to peoples' giving habits when they read and study God's Word? Why?
6. Read Proverbs 3:9. What are you directed to do?
7. What are some good reasons for giving in public? What are some wrong reasons?
8. Read 1 Corinthians 16:2. What are the key points regarding giving?
9. What kind of giving attitude did the following people have and what portion did they give:
  - ✠ Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-24)
  - ✠ Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
  - ✠ Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-23)
10. Read 2 Corinthians 8:7. What does it mean to excel in the grace of giving?

### Prayer

Lord, thank you for your generosity to us. Help us to be generous toward you and others. Grant us faith to grow in the grace of giving. May we see our money as a tool to use to extend your kingdom and help those in need. In your precious name we pray. **Amen.**





*Our stewardship is the expression of our faith as we manage our lives and resources for God's purposes. It is the wise management of who we are and all that we have. God has chosen us as his stewards and grants us the wonderful privilege to serve the Kingdom. God also equips and empowers us for service. As God molds and transforms us into his stewards, we acknowledge that everything in this life is a sacred trust from him. God is the source and owner of all things. He allows us to use his creation and intends it for our good.*

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# *Fulfilling God's Purpose!*



## **Introduction**

Jesus' relationship with his Father.

Jesus' relationship with his family.

Jesus' relationship with his disciples.

Jesus' relationship with us.

## **Sample of PowerPoint Slide**

Through our relationship with Jesus, we are encouraged and motivated to build relationships with others, giving us the opportunity to share Christ's love.