

parish

*Transformed by
Grace, Faith and Love
A Three-Week Stewardship Program*



“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

2 Corinthians 9:8

Overview and Instructions

Program Description

Transformed by Grace, Faith & Love is a complete 3-week stewardship program. Be prepared to find this stewardship emphasis a very rewarding, educational, and enjoyable program! The virtues of grace, faith, and love are essential to our Christian faith and our calling and work as God's stewards. As such, our themes each week are:

Week 1: Transformed by Grace

Week 2: Transformed by Faith

Week 3: Transformed by Love

In 2 Corinthians 9:8, it becomes clear that with God's grace, we can become great stewards: "*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*" This program helps transform Christians to be the best stewards they can be.

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 theme of stewardship.

Program Theme and Goal

Grace, faith, and love are the focus for this stewardship emphasis. These three spiritual pillars are foundations for the steward who has received these gifts from God. As sinful and selfish people, we have done nothing to deserve or earn God's grace, faith, and love, but we receive them with joy and gratitude. These three pillars transform our hearts so we become "God-centered" rather than "self-centered" people. We have a new direction and purpose for our lives. Through his gifts of grace, faith, and love, God transforms us into responsible stewards who seek to please him. Our faithful stewardship is evidence that we are people transformed by grace, faith, and love.

Program Notes

Sunday Morning Bible Studies

In order for your members to grow in their relationship with the Lord and to grow as stewards, it is necessary to spend time reading and studying God's Word. The three studies for weekend adult Bible study are included, as well as an answer guide.

Daily Devotions

It is recommended that you distribute the daily devotions prior to the program or on the first Sunday at the start of the emphasis.

Testimonials/Lay reader presentations

There are three written lay-reader presentations provided, or you may choose to use the talks that have been prerecorded. Personal testimonials are more effective, but, if no willing member is found to share his/her stewardship story with the congregation, these talks may be used. The talks may be given at the start of the service or during the time of the offering.

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Commitment Sunday

Members should be encouraged to make financial commitments to the Lord. Commitment forms can be distributed prior to the program, or with the bulletins on Commitment Sunday, which is the third Sunday of the program. A letter to accompany them is provided. Members should be asked to bring their commitments forward to the altar. Every effort should be made to make Commitment Sunday a special and meaningful day. To show the joy and importance of making a commitment to the Lord, you may want to have balloons and/or other decorations. You could provide some special snacks. Some churches have found that inviting a special guest preacher is helpful. Some churches celebrate their commitments by having a lunch on Sunday.

Extra commitment forms need to be available on Commitment Sunday. If you send the pastor's letter to your members, you are encouraged to enclose a commitment form with the letter. This will act as a reminder for members to think and pray about their commitments. If they fail to bring their commitment form with them, it won't matter because there will be another form for them on Commitment Sunday.

Banners (Optional)

The program resources include text and images to create your own full-size banner to promote the program, if desired.

Follow-up Letters

You are encouraged to send reminder letters to those who failed to return their commitment forms, as well as send thank-you letters to members who returned their commitment forms after the final week of the program.

Program Resources

Downloadable from your account at the *Parish Resource Center*

Resources – General

- † Program Instructions and Timeline
- † Program images for bulletin, newsletter, emails, slides or handouts (5, high-resolution)
- † Letters from the pastor (3)
- † Percentage giving chart
- † Daily devotions (All three weeks.)

Resources to Launch Program

- † Program Flyer (Both use-as-is and editable versions)
- † Kick-off Letter from the Pastor
- † Commitment form (2 formats to choose from)
- † Newsletter article
- † Bulletin message

Resources for EACH of the 3 Weeks of the Program

- † Bible studies

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Transformed by Grace

Transformed by Faith

Transformed by Love

- † Bulletin messages
- † Lay reader presentation (Includes PowerPoint slides and pre-recorded audio files, use of which is optional.)
- † Sermon (Week 2 includes PowerPoint slides, use of which is optional.)
- † Worship suggestions
- † Children's Lesson

Program Time Line

Launching the Program

Program Flyer	Distribute or display, as desired. <i>(Use as-is, or edit flyer for church name, year and date.) If desired, create a large banner from available text and image resources to promote the program.</i>
Daily Devotions	Prepare the Daily Devotions (printed or emailed). The Daily Devotions are provided in both full-size and booklet format, and are set up for easy duplex printing.
Bible Studies	Prepare the Bible Studies and distribute (printed or emailed).
Commitment forms	Finalize <i>(Edit red text areas)</i> and Print Commitment Forms <i>(Use card stock, if desired)</i>
Newsletter Article	Publish “ <i>Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love</i> ” newsletter article one month prior to program.
Lay Readers	Identify and prep three Lay Readers. <i>(Use included PowerPoint slides, if desired. Use included pre-recorded lay reader messages as back up.)</i>
Letter from Pastor and Commitment Form	Mail letter, theme essay and Commitment Form to members so they receive them shortly before the beginning of the program. <i>(Edit Commitment Form for year and church name. Both tri-fold or letter formats of theme essay included.)</i>
Bulletin Messages	Place “ <i>Coming Soon! Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love</i> ” with artwork in bulletins two to three weeks prior to program. There is a message for the period prior to the program plus one for each week of the program to be placed in the bulletin.

The Three Weeks of the Program

For each week	Publish bulletin message. Provide extra devotions, as needed. Members should be encouraged to read the devotions prior to next week's sermon.
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Present lay reader message.
Use worship suggestions, as desired.
Preach sermon.
Teach Children's lesson.

At some point during the program

Hand out or explain Percent Giving Chart.
Provide reminder about Commitment Sunday.

Last week of the program

Commitment Sunday
Collect commitment forms.

After the Program

Letter to those not returning a commitment

Send reminder letters to members who failed to return their commitment forms.

Letter to those who turned in a commitment

Send thank-you letters to members who returned commitment forms.



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Grace Engenders Gratitude

Webster's New World Dictionary defines grace as "the love and favor of God toward man." Grace is God's unmerited favor. It is unmerited, unearned, and undeserved. Grace is not ours to earn; it is God's to give. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "*What do you have that you did not receive?*" (1 Corinthians 4:7). As Christians, we understand that all we are and have are by God's grace. "*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace*" (John 1:16). God lavishes us with his grace. Each day we celebrate God's gift of life. We bask in the beauty of God's creation. We receive blessing after blessing from our wonderful, giving, and gracious God.

The zenith of God's grace is the gift of his Son, Jesus, who gives us the gift of salvation. As the acronym for grace so aptly states, we have "God's Riches at Christ's Expense." Even though we are sinful and undeserving, God sent his Son, Jesus, to die on a cross, and we are given eternal salvation. God was not bound by necessity to give salvation. It is the result of God's gracious will. Salvation is a gift. Many strive to earn this gift, but none of us is capable of doing so.

By God's grace, God calls us to be his stewards. Rev. James Ryle, founder of Truth Works Ministry, wrote, "Grace is the empowering presence of God enabling you to be who he created you to be, and to do what he has called you to do." God's grace gives us both the desire and the power to do his will.

Knowing that God has graciously given us our physical and spiritual lives, we seek to show our gratitude by how we live and what we do with our lives. An important way to show our thanksgiving is to be God-pleasing stewards. Faithful stewardship expresses our love and gratitude to God, and our faithful stewardship gives evidence of God's grace in our lives.

Faith Produces Works

Faith is the most precious gift anyone can receive from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith is "*more precious than gold*" (1 Peter 1:7). It is dependent solely on God. By his grace, he gives us faith.



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Letter to members who have not turned in a Commitment Form

Reprint  Stewards
Transformed

Dear Member,

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

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints” (Colossians 1:3-4). Through the faithful stewardship of the Body of Christ here at our church, we are able to proclaim the Gospel in both word and deed.

During our recent stewardship emphasis, *Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love*, we focused on how God transforms us so we are equipped and inspired to be his stewards. By his grace, God calls us to be his stewards, and, through our God-given faith, we understand that God is the source of all good things. As recipients of his grace, faith, and love, we demonstrate our gratitude by faithfully receiving, managing, and sharing God’s blessings.

How can we respond to this great love of our Father and use all his gifts to us for his glory? God is totally committed to us. Are you willing to make a commitment to him? Your commitment form has not yet been received. Perhaps you’re still praying about it; maybe you’ve forgotten it; maybe it’s been lost. We are enclosing another form and ask that you complete it and return it to the church office at your earliest convenience.

Thank you and may God continue to pour out his blessings on you as you experience the joy of being God’s steward.

Serving Christ together,

Pastor _____

Only

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Worship Suggestions – Week 2

Week two: “Transformed by Faith”

Readings:

Old Testament: 1 Kings 17:8-16 (17-24)
Epistle: Romans 3:21-3 (or Hebrews 11)
Gospel: Luke 7:1-10

Hymns:

With the Lord Begin Your Task
Faith and Truth and Life Bestowing
My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Stewardship Litany:

Leader: Our poor stewardship is often seen in how we mismanage and misuse the blessings that you entrust to us.

People: Lord, transform our hearts and grant us faith so we can be God-pleasing stewards.

Leader: Because we are self-centered people, we fail to love our neighbors as you call us to do.

People: Lord, grant us faith so we can be Christ-centered people who, through the work of the Holy Spirit, become God-pleasing stewards.

Leader: We confess that we often fail to make giving to our church and those in need a priority.

People: Forgive us, Lord, for ignoring the opportunities you place before us to witness and to help those in need of your love and care. Help us to be the God-pleasing stewards that you have equipped us to be.

Leader: Lord God, we thank you for your Spirit’s continuing work of sanctification as he transforms us into God-pleasing stewards.

People: Through Jesus we pray. Amen.

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Sermon – Third Sunday

“The Proof of our Love”

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

Today is the last week of our stewardship emphasis **Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love**. For this week, our focus is on stewards transformed by love.

Our text is the epistle lesson found in 1 John 4. There is a sermon outline in your worship folder that you may be interested in using.

Six-year-old Johnnie comes home from first grade, and he asks his mother, “Mom where do I come from?” His mother thought, Oh dear, I wish his father was here to answer the question. She had hoped the question would not have come up for a few more years. After she had slowly and carefully explained the anatomy of males and females, she asked Johnny, “Why did you ask?” He said, “My friend Bobby came from Chicago, so I was wondering where I came from.”

There is also some misunderstanding when we talk about God’s love so I would like to make three points that we need to understand about God’s love for us.

In our epistle lesson for today we find our first point which is **“love begins with God.”** Verse seven of our Epistle lesson says, “Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” By ourselves, we are incapable of loving. But many people consider love to have originated with themselves. If we were to love, it would be a very selfish and self-centered kind of love. Christians know that God is the origin of love. God first loved us, and he enables us to share that love with others. God is not only the origin of love. Verse 8 tells us “God is love.” The very nature of God is love. Everything that God does and says originates from his love for us. He created us in love, and, when we fell into sin, instead of giving up on us or destroying us, he set about to redeem us. He showed his love for us as he sent his Son to pay the sacrifice for sins. He sent his Son into the world to die on the Cross as the propitiation for our sins. In verse 10, we see that propitiation means that he was the atoning sacrifice for our sins. A sacrifice had to be made for our sins. Jesus was the perfect lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, and he does that so that we might live through him. Because of God’s love and forgiveness, we have eternal life in his name. So we see, “Love begins with God.”

The second major point is that **“God’s love has a dramatic effect on us.”** Verse 7 says we are born of God. Through Holy Baptism, we are born again of water and the Spirit and become children of God. Our old natural birth has been superseded by a new supernatural birth. We have been transformed or changed. We are no longer the same persons we once were because of that transformation. We all know about the metamorphosis that takes place in a caterpillar as it becomes a butterfly. As great as the transformation is from a caterpillar to a butterfly, the transformation that occurs in our lives is much greater than that, because at one time we were lost, and now we are found. At one time, we were dead, and now we are made alive. At one time, we were enemies of God, and Scripture says that now we are considered his dear friends and dear children. Not only are we born of God, we know God. We possess knowledge of God that unbelievers do not have. We do not just know about God intellectually, but we know God personally and intimately, because we are the recipients of his love as