

Graceful Generosity

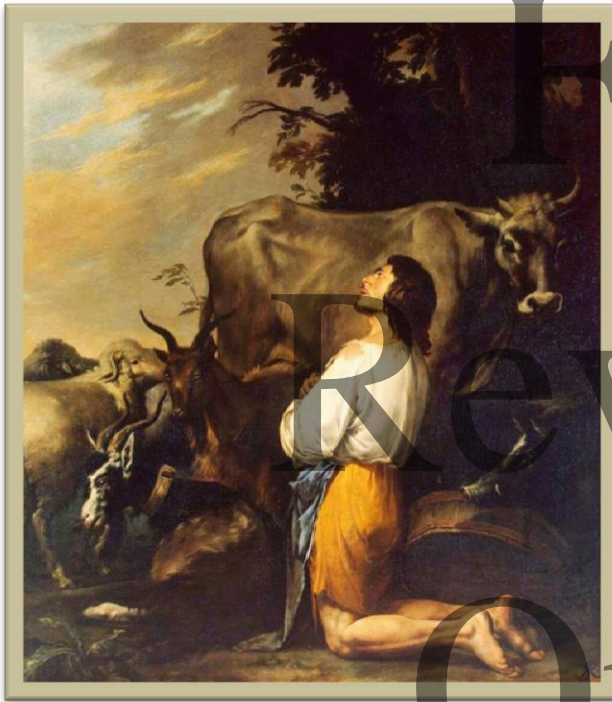
Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

A Definition of Stewardship

"Christian stewardship is the practice of the Christian religion. It is neither a department of life nor a sphere of activity. It is the Christian conception of life as a whole, manifested in attitudes and actions." (W. H. Greever)

Testing your Knowledge of Scripture

Can you identify who the following person may represent in Scripture?



If you said the Prodigal Son, you were right. In Luke 15:11-32, Jesus told the parable of a wealthy farmer who had two sons. The younger of the two sons was not happy living at home so he left home with his share of the estate which was given to him by his father. While he was gone, he *"squandered his wealth in wild living"* (verse 13).

When the son finally came to his senses, he was ready to go home. He confessed his sin to God and to his father. He said, *"I have sinned against heaven and against you,*

I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (verses 18-19).

The parable ends with his loving father embracing him and celebrating his return. In this parable, Jesus illustrated the love of the father for his son in order to make it abundantly clear that God's love is infinite. God's love toward us sinners is unconditional and eternal.

The love of the Father shown in this parable is our motivation for Christian stewardship. In spite of who we are and what we do, God doesn't stop loving us. We respond out of gratitude in honoring him with the faithful use of our time, talents, and treasures.

On the Lighter Side

A pastor was talking to the church organist. "When I finish my sermon," he said, "I'll ask for all those in the congregation who want to contribute \$500 toward the church's debt to stand up. In the meantime, you can provide appropriate music."

"Any suggestions?" the organist asked.

"You might try the Star Spangled Banner," the pastor replied.

A Stewardship Thought

While opportunities to use our gifts seem almost limitless, we must be willing to make ourselves available. Often our tendency is to look at our shortcomings rather than to focus on Philippians 4:13: *"I can do all things through him who gives me strength."* As stewards we are to use our gifts gladly and wholeheartedly in service to God alone.

***God must work in us ...
If he is to work through us.***

Expressing Your Thanks to God

How are you saying THANKS to God for all that he has entrusted to you? When you think of Christian stewardship, you probably think of what you place in the offering plate. I hope that you are showing your gratitude through generous giving, but what about using your talents for God through the church?

All of us, to one degree or another, have the ability to do things that can be of benefit to our church. In other words ... after you have heard the sermon and participated in Holy Communion ... now it's time to show your thanks by doing some work for the Lord.

You may ask: "Why should I?" Think for a moment about our situation. Many do not realize that sin is a big problem and obstacle in this world. We do. Thanks to the Word of God, we have been brought to the realization that forgiveness is needed every day. Scripture also tells us that salvation is a free gift that we can't earn. That fact should make us more eager to say thanks to God who has saved and freed us from eternal prison and gives us a fresh start every day.

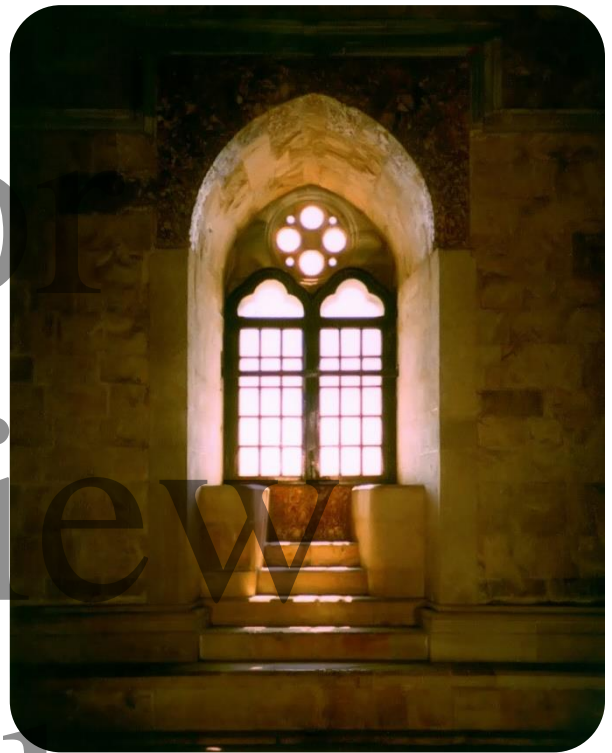
As stewards, we realize that our talents and abilities are gifts from God that are to be used in his service. When we use our gifts for God's glory, we are acknowledging that he is the provider, and we express our thanks for what he gives to us. Some of the tasks that we can do around the church are fairly obvious, such as being kind and courteous to fellow worshippers and visitors, giving words of encouragement, singing in the choir, ushering, teaching Sunday school, serving on committees or boards, washing the windows, etc. Check with us in the church office to see how you can use your gifts.

There are many ways of expressing thanks to the Lord. We hope that one of the ways that you will say thanks is through using your talents at our church.

Closing Thought

We can live one of two ways ... with or without Christ. We can live without Christ, living just for ourselves, exalting worldly pleasures and success, or we can live with Christ, exalting him as the risen Lord.

We can squander our talents, waste our time, and spend our money foolishly, or we can use these God-given gifts to his glory as they benefit others. *"Each of us will give an account of himself to God,"* we read in Romans 14:12. Let us be among those who hear the words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant!"* (Matthew 25:21).



Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!