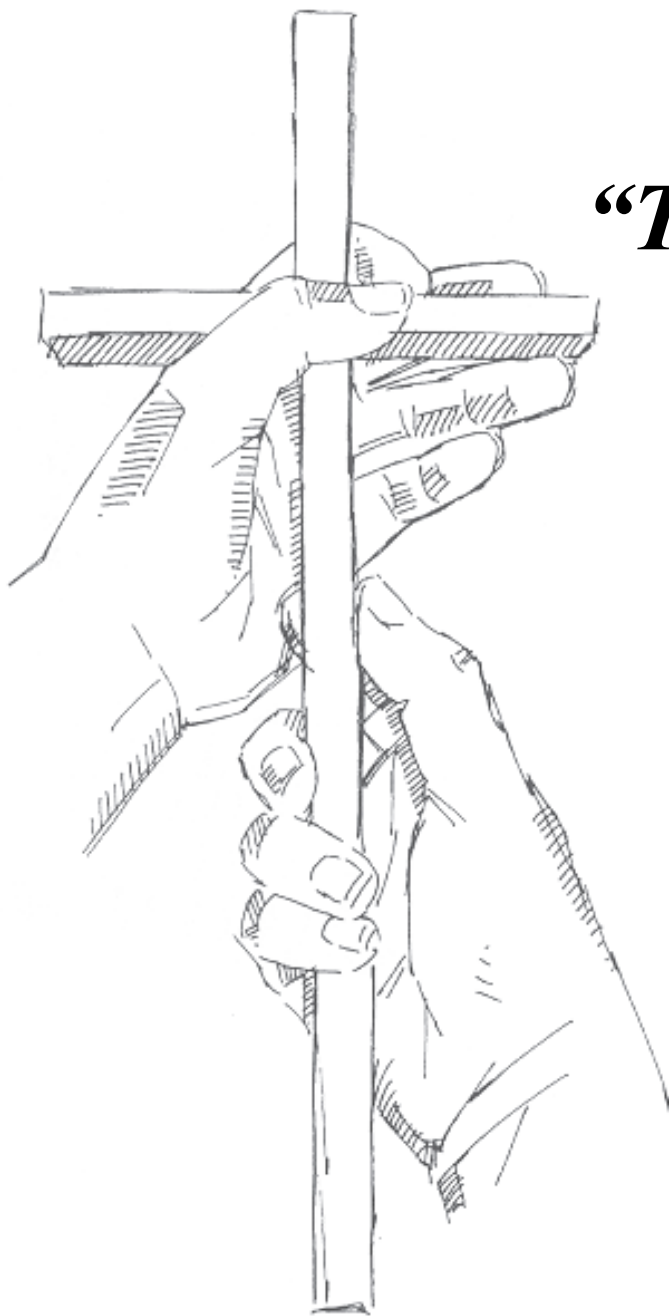


Stewardship – A Way of Life



***“Teach Me, O Lord,
Your Ways”***

- Psalm 86:11

- *Ways to Pray*
- *Ways to Serve*
- *Ways to Give*

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”

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“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”

*Our
commitment to
Stewardship as a
Way of life*

In the Gospel of John, Chapter 8, Verse 31, Jesus said, “If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples.” The U.S. Bishops wrote a 1992 Pastoral Letter on Stewardship entitled “Stewardship, a Disciple’s Response.” The Christian Disciple, the Bishops say, is one who responds to Christ’s call, follows Jesus and shapes his or her life in imitation of Christ’s. This means that to be a Disciple of Christ, one must not only listen to the teachings of Christ but internalize these teachings and put them into practice in daily life. It is by this practice that one becomes a steward of Christ’s gifts – the gift of life, of parenthood, of priesthood, of religious life, of vocation, of profession, of material blessings, and so on...the list of gifts we are endowed with is endless. The Christian steward or disciple, the Bishops add, “has the responsibility to share these gifts in justice and love,” not only with one another but with the whole Church, in fulfilling its mission to spread the Good News of Christ. The Christian steward or disciple has the responsibility to preserve, nurture, cultivate, develop and share each and every gift that he or she possesses.

Stephen R. Covey, in his audiotape “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” speaks of responsibility as a person’s ability to choose a response. Is there one among us who does not possess the ability to respond, in a most positive and loving way, to Christ’s teachings? Is there one among us who would consciously shirk our ability to respond to His call to share our gifts with one another in justice and love? Certainly not! We all have the ability to respond to the call. Sometimes the “Call” or the messages we hear regarding stewardship are not always pleasant. We may feel that what we are asked to do as a Christian steward is sometimes unrealistic or too hard to accomplish. If this indeed is our response, what we are really saying is, we don’t have the time to follow the teachings of Christ, that we don’t want to live our life in imitation of Christ. Which one among us would consciously do this? In good conscience, we cannot pick and choose the messages we like and discard those which make us uncomfortable. The acceptance of God’s word demands humility, simplicity and goodness of heart. “He who is of God hears the word of God.” (John 8:47)

In this education process for Stewardship as a way of life, we will revisit the three areas, (*prayer, ministry and finance*) that make a person a good steward or disciple and instill within that individual’s heart the acceptance that he or she has been bestowed with gifts from a loving Creator. It is his or her responsibility to build the kingdom of God here on earth by using these gifts.

As leaders of the stewardship process in the Diocese of Memphis, we must individually and collectively study the meaning of stewardship, familiarize ourselves with the biblical basis of stewardship, internalize these messages and become living examples of Christian stewards or disciples.

The three things that facilitate the stewardship process in our lives are the ways we use our gifts from God (our time, talent and treasure). We will focus on the use of these gifts through **prayer, ministry and finance**. This guidebook will direct the parish leaders and parish members through the education process of stewardship as a way of life. If followed and then practiced, and not only paid lip service to, this teaching manual will lead the parish family, as well as each individual, to “do good to all but especially those of the household of the faith.” (Gal. 6:10)

This guidebook will furnish the tools needed to enhance each parishioner’s ability to respond to Christ’s Call to be His disciple. This will be done through:



Prayer

Prayer lays the groundwork that leads people to follow Christ as a steward or disciple. Stewardship as a way of life is not a program or a campaign – it entails a change of heart, a spiritual conversion process. We all know that prayer changes people and that people change things. Our stewardship education in this diocese will rely heavily on prayer as the root, the core, the basis and the foundation of our efforts to lead people to follow Christ’s teachings. Mother Teresa said, “The fruit of SILENCE is Prayer, the fruit of PRAYER is Faith, the fruit of FAITH is Love, the fruit of LOVE is Service, the fruit of SERVICE is Peace.”

Ministry

Albert Schweitzer said, “I do not know what your destiny will be, but what I do know is those among you who will be truly happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.” One Stewardship Committee Chair said this about her parish’s stewardship efforts, “Once people become involved in service in the parish as a volunteer minister, then they see the needs of the parish and rally to meet these needs.” She added, “That’s how it happened for me.” Our Stewardship of Ministry process will invite people to make a commitment to service in the parish. We know that we will make a difference in the people’s lives who accept this challenge – they will become happier and ultimately the parish will benefit from their involvement.



Finance

Introduction

Stewardship of Finance is probably the most delicate aspect of the stewardship conversion. People can and do become very defensive when we speak to them of money. We will invite the parishioners to experience a “conversion of heart” as we walk them through the stewardship of finance phase of the process. We will teach them that the spirit of Christian giving is born of faith and love and nourished by prayer. For Catholics, the parish Church is a link with the whole Mystical Body of Christ. It is a spiritual home. There, he or she is born to God’s grace by Baptism, fortified by Confirmation, healed of sin by Confession, given spiritual food in Communion. The parish is where a Catholic joins his or her parish family for prayer, worship, recreation and fellowship. Just as we love our biological families and tend to their well-being, we are called to love our spiritual family and tend to its needs also.

You are urged to follow the plan in this guidebook in its entirety. Diluting its elements will weaken its overall effect.

We embark upon this new model of Stewardship Education in the Diocese of Memphis with great excitement and anticipation of wonderful results. We do this in our fervent desire to follow Jesus’ teachings so that we can become His disciples and mold our lives in imitation of His knowing in faith, hope and love, that by doing this we can achieve happiness here and eternally. So, with the psalmist, we pray, “Lord, teach me your ways”...Ways to Pray, Ways to Serve, Ways to Give. Amen. God Bless your efforts!

*Forming a
Stewardship
Committee*

The first critical need is forming a stewardship committee in the parish. Hopefully, there will be those who have emerged as proactive stewards in the parish who are eager to share the theology of stewardship with others. Capitalize on this enthusiasm and zeal. Recruit, from this group, members for the stewardship committee/commission. You will find it helpful to follow the guidelines, found on the next page, for selecting your stewardship committee members.

Pastors should not neglect this very important step in building a solid foundation for parish stewardship. The stewardship committee is a necessary and indispensable element in the ultimate outcome of a parish's efforts to convert parishioners to living out their faith by being good stewards of God's gifts. Historically, parishes who have not used an active stewardship committee to implement the process have been doomed to fail. The stewardship committee is as important as any other commission or ministry in the parish. For it is, after all, good practicing Christian stewards who fill the rosters of parish commissions and ministries.

The stewardship committee should exist under the direction of the pastor or the parish council rather than the finance committee. If a movement towards total stewardship in the parish is to take hold, it must be spiritually based. Stewardship cannot be cloaked in a disguise covering an ulterior motive, the church's need to receive, as in money or volunteers. Stewardship can only root and thrive when the individual acknowledges that all he or she has is a gift from God. That person will then give out of gratitude, willingly and lovingly. Gratitude to a loving and generous God will then become the only motive for giving. Stewardship is then put in the proper context, 'it satisfies the individual's need to give, not the churches need to receive.'

The following draws a profile of a potential stewardship member:

*Selecting
Stewardship
Committee
Members*

1. Deeply Spiritual – Your spiritual parishioners are easy to spot. You see them at daily Mass. They display a great love for the sacraments. They exude an aura of serenity and peace that flows from an intimate relationship with Christ. These individuals will serve on a stewardship committee for all of the right reasons. Their actions will be prompted by their deep love of Jesus and their gratitude for His gifts.

2. Good Stewards – Good and faithful Christian stewards are already living **Stewardship - A Way of Life**. They are committed volunteers and serve selflessly in all aspects of their life, family, church, community, etc. They freely give of themselves no matter what the cost. They are also generous with their financial blessings, always willing to share with those less fortunate. They, more than likely, are your more generous offertory givers.



*Duties of a
Stewardship
Committee*

Stewardship Committee

3. Visionary – People who are farsighted and have the ability and imagination to envision what the parish can be under the auspices of stewardship. They will be able to develop a strategic plan for how the parish can grow spiritually, develop its ministries and increase its outreach. They can write a mission statement for the parish which will guide the goals and direction of the parish in the future.

4. Action oriented – Leaders should be people who are committed, accountable, creative, good time managers, articulate, possess leadership qualities and willing to get the job done.

1. Conduct stewardship education activities in the parish. This can be done by following the lead of the Diocesan Development Office. Typically, these activities will include, a homily by the pastor, witness by lay volunteers, two to three mailings to the parishioners (including thank-you letters), collection of commitment cards, placing bulletin articles plus other activities that may be included and designed to educate and communicate.

2. Recruit couples and/or individuals to give pulpit talks sharing their personal testimony about stewardship. This personal witness has proven extremely effective in motivating other parishioners by delivering the stewardship message in a way that they can relate. The Diocesan Development Office can provide sample talks and guidelines/pointers for giving a stewardship talk.

3. Prepare a catalog of committees, ministries and services offered by the parish. You will want to publicize the number of opportunities that are available for those who will want to participate in stewardship of ministry. This will be a good time to assess existing services and to add new services and ministries, while recruiting volunteers. Include all of your prayer ministries and other activities that provide opportunity for spiritual growth and renewal.

4. Provide follow-up. It is imperative that individuals who have volunteered for a ministry or prayer program be contacted and personally invited to become involved. It will be the responsibility of the stewardship committee to contact the various commissions, committees, services, ministries and prayer groups to follow-up and ensure that each and every individual who has volunteered has been contacted. You cannot overstate the importance of this function. People who volunteer to become involved in parish ministry and are never contacted is one of the reasons many parishioners look upon stewardship as a gimmick for raising money and become very skeptical about the parish's real reason for implementing stewardship education.

5. Dispense educational materials on stewardship. The Development Office of the Diocese can provide many resources for brochures, pamphlets and other educational materials pertaining to stewardship. It is essential that the stewardship committee provide ongoing stewardship education and awareness. Many parishioners will have to hear the messages of stewardship repeated many times before they will begin to embrace the concepts.

6. Use the parish Sunday bulletin to publish weekly stewardship messages. The Office of Development distributes bulletin bits for every Sunday of the year. Use these or develop your own using Scripture quotes from the Old and New Testament. The committee may find interesting and appropriate materials in stewardship publications or get creative and devise stewardship messages pertinent to your parish and parishioners.

7. Include stewardship messages in Prayers of the Faithful at Mass. Collaborate with the Liturgical commission to introduce stewardship messages that are appropriate and timely.

8. Ask your pastor to include stewardship messages in his homilies on a regular basis. There are many readings and gospels that afford this opportunity over the three year liturgical cycle. This step will demonstrate that this is a theological concept not a contrived program.

9. Evaluate your stewardship process on an annual basis. How is the process working in the parish? Are the stewardship education materials doing the job? Are volunteers being contacted and activated in the ministry or post they expressed a desire to join? Have any negative or positive comments/reactions from parishioners been properly addressed? Were your speakers effective? How can we improve?

10. Formulate plans to begin stewardship education for children in the parish. Work stewardship concepts into parish religious education (PRE). Educate your religion teachers. Distribute children's envelopes to the children in the parish and encourage their use. Children's envelopes should be made available with entries for them to indicate good deeds they performed for others, special prayers they might have said or portions of their allowance that they gave to God. Planting the seeds of stewardship in children will produce better adult stewards.



*Immediate
Things to Do*

Immediate Things to Do

- 1.** Mobilize your stewardship committee and recruit volunteers necessary to conduct procedures.
- 2.** Thoroughly review the “How to Use this Guide” section.
- 3.** Tailor the proposed timeline to your parish calendar.
- 4.** Order ample supplies of parish stationery and envelopes to conduct direct mail phase of plan. Mail thank-you letters to those who responded and follow-up letters to those who did not respond to the first mailings. Remember, you will need a separate set for **Prayer, Ministry, and Finance.**
- 5.** Update your parish census. The key to the success of the process is direct mail. That personalized letter from the pastor inviting the parishioner to support and become a part of the stewardship process is paramount.
- 6.** Recruit a lay presenter to deliver a pulpit talk on weekend of _____ (*month/day*), weekend of _____ (*month/day*) and, weekend of _____ (*month/day*). The presenter(s), individual or couple, should exemplify the characteristics of a good steward or disciple. It is more powerful when the presenter is willing to give personal witness to the effect of stewardship in his or her life.

Proposed Timeline

Stewardship of Prayer

Week of _____ (month/day)

Stewardship Committee begins preparations for direct mail, pulpit talks, bulletin articles, follow-up letters and thank-you letters.

Week of _____ (month/day)

Pastor's letter mailed to all parishioners.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Pastor gives homily on Stewardship of Prayer and first bulletin article appears.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Commitment Weekend

Pastor calls for commitment Cards and makes Commitment Cards available to those who don't have them. Second bulletin article appears. (Presenting cards at offertory time with other gifts as symbolic gesture is suggested).

Week of _____ (month/day)

Committee begins follow-up. Send letters of thanks to those who have committed to prayer. Send follow-up letters to those who have not committed.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Third bulletin article appears (Thank You).

Relax and reap the rewards of a job well done!

Stewardship of Ministry

Week of _____ (month/day)

Stewardship Committee begins preparations for direct mail, pulpit talks, bulletin articles, follow-up letters and thank-you letters.

Week of _____ (month/day)

Pastor's letter mailed to all parishioners.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Pastor gives homily on Stewardship of Ministry and first bulletin article appears.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Lay presenter(s) gives pulpit talk on Stewardship of Ministry and second bulletin article appears.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Stewardship Committee, along with organization and ministry leaders, conduct Festival of Ministries after each Sunday Mass.

Proposed Timeline

**Stewardship of
Finance**

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Commitment Weekend

Pastor calls for Commitment Cards and makes Commitment Cards available to those who don't have them. (Presenting cards at offertory time with other gifts as symbolic gesture is suggested).

Week of _____ (month/day)

Committee begins follow-up. Send letters of thanks to those who have volunteered to serve. Make immediate personal contact with those who have volunteered. Send follow-up letters to those who have not committed.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Third bulletin article appears (Thank You).

Relax and reap the rewards of a job well done!

Week of _____ (month/day)

Stewardship Committee begins preparations for direct mail, pulpit talks, bulletin articles, follow-up letters and thank-you letters.

Week of _____ (month/day)

Pastor's letter mailed to all parishioners.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Pastor gives homily on Stewardship of Finance.
First bulletin article appears.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Lay Presenter gives pulpit talk on Stewardship of Finance.

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Commitment Sunday – Pastor calls for Commitment Cards and makes Commitment Cards available to those who don't have them. (Presenting Cards at offertory time with gifts as symbolic gesture is suggested).

Weekend of _____ (month/day)

Second bulletin article appears – (Thank You).

Relax and reap the rewards of a job well done!

*Step-by-step
guide*

This step-by-step guide to using your stewardship manual includes helpful pointers to make your effort successful.

- ✠ Read the manual from cover to cover, thoroughly familiarizing yourself with its contents and message. Once you know what it contains, instructions will be easy to follow.
- ✠ Assign tasks to your stewardship committee members and volunteers to begin the project.

*Establish your
timeline*

In the previous section there is a proposed timeline that calls for three phases. Phase I is for the implementation of Stewardship of Prayer, Phase II Stewardship of Ministry and Phase III Stewardship of Finance. Determine the best timeline for your parish.

We suggest you implement this model in this order. You have the flexibility to implement each phase when it best fits in your parish calendar. For example, one parish starts with Stewardship of Prayer in August in conjunction with the Feast of the Assumption, Stewardship of Ministry in the fall at the start of school, and Stewardship of Finance along with the Feast of the Epiphany.

A parish in the diocese who has had an ongoing stewardship process for many years may prefer to cover **Prayer, Ministry and Finance** at the same time. This is permissible and can easily be accomplished by slight adjustments to this model, i.e. a prayer and ministry letter can be combined with the finance letter and redrafted to include all three. The same would be necessary with the follow-up and thank-you letters. The Stewardship of Finance (Ways to Give) bulletin article would be put into sequence with the Ways to Pray and Ways to Serve articles and so on. However, this is not recommended for those just getting started or those renewing the message of stewardship.

*Order and
gather all
materials you
will need*

1. Order ample stationery, letterhead and envelopes to mail out the pastor's letter. Provide enough to conduct follow-up letters and thank-you letters.
2. Check the postage in your office or account at the post office.
3. Order your supply of Commitment Cards from your local printer or by contacting the company who did the original job for the Development Office. Repeat this process for all three phases.

*Prepare your
direct mail*

4. Estimate how many Commitment Cards you will need to mail out plus place extras in the pews. Consider mailing additional cards in your follow-up mailing to those who did not respond to first mailing. The letter copy calls for this.

5. Check copy machine supplies to copy bulletin articles to be inserted or stapled to Sunday bulletins.

1. Do not skip this step. This is a critical part of the stewardship education process. It is proven that a letter received in the home from the pastor or pastoral leader spelling out what the stewardship process involves, asking for support and asking for a commitment is the single most motivational factor in getting parishioners to respond. You cannot be successful without this step

2. Personalize your letter. The letter must be personalized to be effective. There is no bigger turn-off to a member of your family of faith than to receive a letter with a stick-on label and a non-personal salutation asking for support of a plan that is so spiritual in nature with such far-reaching consequences for the parish family.

Today's computer technology makes personalization an easy task. Smaller parishes who are not equipped can borrow the equipment and expertise of a volunteer parishioner and pay for the minimal costs of completing the project. Parishes who may be equipped but may find the project too cumbersome can consider engaging the service of a mail-house. Contact the Diocesan Development Office for more information.

Follow-up

3. Once initial Commitment Cards are turned in, take immediate steps to thank those who have responded and mail follow-up letters to those who have not. If follow-up letters generate additional responses, remember to send out thank-you letters in a timely fashion.

4. Very Important Persons who have volunteered to serve in a ministry should be contacted immediately by a member of the committee or commission to sign them up and put them to work. The quickest way to demoralize a person who has volunteered to serve, especially first-timers, is to not contact them.

Very important

The Commitment Cards are designed to be generic in nature. Ministries and services vary from parish to parish. Parishes will need to customize their Commitment Cards to suit their situations. This can be done by dealing with the Diocesan Development Office or your printer. More than likely the Prayer and Finance Cards will be suitable as they are, and only the Ministry Cards will have to be adjusted.

*Pastors prepare
your homily*

Use Homily Notes found in this manual as a guide in preparing your homily.

*Lay Presenters
prepare your
talk*

Lay presenters can prepare their talk by using Homily Notes and Tips for the Lay Presenter. Very important: Do not conduct stewardship education process without this important presentation by lay presenter. Powerful testimony has emerged from parishes who recruited lay presenters from their own congregations.

Commitment Sunday is vital to the successful implementation of each phase of your stewardship education process. It is recommended that Commitment Cards be collected at offertory time and offered up with the other gifts. Completing cards in-pew typically results in a higher percent participation. This could be asked of those who have not completed a card and are not prepared to place a card in the offertory basket. Those who have come prepared to commit, of course, will simply place their commitments into the offertory basket at the proper time.

Finally, it is exceedingly important to use all elements of this process: bulletin articles, direct mail from the pastor or pastoral leader, follow-up letters, thank-you letters, homily by pastor, lay presentation, and Commitment Sunday.

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”

STEWARDSHIP OF PRAYER



WAYS TO PRAY

- † **Bulletin Article**
- † **Sample Pastor Letter**
- † **Sample Pastor Follow-up Letter**
- † **Sample Pastor Thank You Letter**

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”



Ways to Pray

A Call to Stewardship of Prayer

*“Again I tell you, if two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted to you by my Father in heaven.”
Matthew 18-19*

*“Ask, and you shall receive.
Seek, and you will find.
Knock, and it will be opened to you.”
Matthew 7:7*

Have you ever had an unexplained sense of peace, serenity and well-being as you drove home from Mass on Sunday, perhaps looking forward to a wonderful “mama meal” to be shared with family or friends? You don’t know quite why, but you just feel good about life in general. The explanation is quite simple – you have just communed with God in prayer.

When we truly reflect upon it, the moments we spend with God in prayer are the times we experience the most peace and joy in our lives. If this is so, then we should strive to create these moments frequently.

Stewardship of Prayer calls us to make prayer a priority in our daily lives. When we are stewards or disciples of Christ, we wish to live our lives in imitation of His. When Christ was on earth, we know that he withdrew from the crowds to seek guidance and solace in prayer. He made time for prayer.

We, too, should always seek time for prayer. Prayer should impact every moment of our lives. We should, as St. Paul tells us, “Pray perseveringly, be attentive to prayer and pray in a spirit of thanksgiving.” (Col 4:2)

The moments we spend in structured prayer – Mass, the rosary, novenas, recitation of formal memorized prayer – are wonderful and draw us into a deeper relationship with God. There are other ways also to achieve a loving friendship with the Lord through prayer: constant prayer of thanksgiving for blessings, the food we eat, family, friends, co-workers. Other prayers can include prayers for guidance and assistance in tasks we perform through the day, and prayers for strangers we meet, asking God to protect them, guide them, give them peace. We can seek and find ways for prayer to impact every aspect of our lives.

Some additional suggestions for making prayer a priority are as follows: 1) Don’t always privatize your prayer; engage family and friends in group prayer; 2) Become involved in at least one spiritual/prayer activity or organization in your parish; 3) Become more involved in the most perfect prayer – the Eucharist – by volunteering to be a choir member, a lector, reader or Eucharistic minister; 4) Spend time in meditation using the bible or other spiritual book for inspiration. Imagine that God is present with you during this time and speak openly and freely with Him about your feelings and thoughts.

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”



Ways to Pray

***“Pray
perseveringly, be attentive to
prayer and pray in
a spirit of
thanksgiving.”***

Col 4:2

***“You will receive all that
you pray for, provided you
have faith.”***

Matthew 21:22

Stewardship of Prayer asks each of you to use your time, which is a gift from God, in prayer to achieve positive results for yourself, your family, your friends, your parish, your city, your diocese and then the world. Use the Suggested Prayer Opportunities in your *Ways to Pray* brochure and make a written commitment to making prayer a priority in your life. Please make your commitment and return according to parish instructions. Your commitment indicates that you believe in prayer for yourself and for the parish. It will also show those around you and those who look up to you that you are serious about making stewardship of prayer a priority in your life. Finally, pray for your pastor and your parish family. Pray that your entire faith community will practice stewardship as a way of life.

Prayer

Dear _____, (Parishioner)

Our parish is embarking on a new process of stewardship education. Through our efforts we will better ourselves, our parish and our community. The United States Catholic Bishops, in a pastoral letter, defined stewardship as a disciple's response. Jesus Himself said "If you live according to my teachings, you are truly my disciples." (John 8:31)

Jesus' teachings regarding stewardship are very specific. Summed up, His teachings say "Love Me and Love one another." These are His two greatest laws. When we love Him we seek to form a more perfect relationship with Him. The best way to develop a relationship with someone is by spending time with them, and conversing with them. When we talk to Jesus through prayer, we enrich our relationship with him.

I will be publishing articles in our bulletin. I ask you to read the articles carefully and prayerfully reflect upon the contents. The first article, "Ways to Pray" will contain the teachings of Jesus regarding prayer and create a vision of how prayer power can impact your life in a very special way.

Finally, I ask that you show your intention of embracing stewardship as a way of life by filling out your Prayer Commitment Cards and placing them in a sealed envelope in the offertory basket on Sunday, _____. You will do this as a visible sign of your intention to follow Christ and His teachings.

I embrace and endorse the process of living our lives as God intended, as good stewards of his bounteous gifts. I ask you to join me in this ongoing process of stewardship and be open to the grace to respond in a loving way.

May God bless you and your loved ones and every member of the _____ parish family.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Prayer

Dear _____,

I wrote to you a few weeks ago about our continuing journey of stewardship as a way of life through the study of Stewardship of Prayer.

I was so deeply touched by many in this parish who chose to respond to the call for action through prayer in support of our stewardship process. Their involvement in prayer will produce graces for this parish that heretofore have not been seen.

I want this letter to serve as a gentle reminder that I have not, as of yet, heard from you (and your family). I am writing to every member of our parish family who has not yet responded to our call to Stewardship of Prayer, hoping that all will respond. This stewardship process and this parish are not complete without you.

Please remember that any commitment you sign is a covenant between you and God. If for some reason you cannot fulfill your commitment, the issue is between you and God. You will not be judged here. I simply wish to remind you that the first step to becoming a steward of God's gifts is to make a commitment. If you have misplaced your cards, you can obtain more at the Church office or use the one enclosed here.

I ask you again to please become a part of stewardship as a way of life in our parish. If for some reason you choose not to, please be assured of my continued love and prayers for you and your family.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Sample Thank-You letter

Dear _____,

How generous you are with your gifts! I thank you for sharing these gifts with your brothers and sisters of _____.

Your commitment to Stewardship of Prayer will go a long way in building the Kingdom of God and saving souls right here in our faith community.

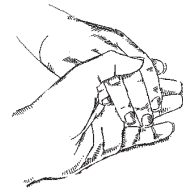
You took a step and cast your pebble of goodness in the stream. From there it will radiate outward in never-ending circles of goodness that touch all around you.

Thank you for your commitment to stewardship. Thank you for sharing His gifts. May He always bless you abundantly for your goodness.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”

STEWARDSHIP OF MINISTRY



WAYS TO SERVE

- † **Bulletin Article**
- † **Sample Pastor Letter**
- † **Sample Pastor Follow-up Letter**
- † **Sample Pastor Thank You Letter**

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”

Ways to Serve

A Call to Stewardship of Ministry

***“Blest are they who show mercy;
mercy shall be theirs.”***

Matthew 5:7

“And I promise you that whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of the lowly ones because he is a disciple will not want for his reward.”

Matthew 10:42

***“Jesus said, Tend my sheep...
feed my sheep.”***

John 21:15-17

Do you volunteer? Do you know the impact volunteering has on your family? Your parish? Your community? Have you ever heard the expression “you get out of it what you put into it”? Volunteering is a classic example of how you get more out of it than you put into it. In addition, when we volunteer we are following the teachings of Christ. As Catholics, our call to serve is issued at Baptism, reinforced at Confirmation and affirmed throughout the Gospel, culminating in the most perfect example of service – Jesus’ ritual of the washing of the feet at The Last Supper.

We as Catholics have a 2000 plus-year tradition of service and ministry to our Church and our brothers and sisters. This tradition was formed by volunteers who have taken to heart the Lord’s criteria for salvation, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me.” (Matthew 25:35-36). There is no government, no institution, no other religion, no entity that is as large or has impacted society in such a positive way as the Catholic Church. We, as a Church, empowered by our Baptism, through service and ministry have built churches that provide spiritual homes for people; hospitals that heal the sick; schools that form young minds and train priests; social service centers that house homeless, clothe the naked, feed the hungry and restore dignity to the least among us. The list of contributions that we, the Catholic Church, have made to society over 2000 years is endless, and the numbers of people who have been served is unfathomable.

Stewardship of Ministry calls you to carry on the wonderful Catholic tradition of volunteerism. You can do this by volunteering to use your time and talent to serve in any one of the various organizations in the parish. Each of you possesses a unique talent that is a gift from your loving Creator. In gratitude for your gifts, He asks that you share these gifts with others. Each member of this parish community should review the Stewardship of Ministry cards and take the time to prayerfully consider where your talents can best be used.

Please make a commitment to serve in at least one ministry in the parish. If you are already serving, renew your commitment to serve and, if possible, volunteer in other ministries. Ask every member of your family, including the children, to also serve in some capacity. Please make a visible sign of your intention to serve the parish by filling out the commitment card and clearly marking which service or ministry you wish to commit to. You will be promptly contacted. We ask you to place your written commitment in the offertory basket on Commitment Sunday as a symbol of your willingness to serve the Lord and your fellow parishioners.

Mother Teresa said, “The fruit of SILENCE is Prayer, the fruit of PRAYER is Faith, the fruit of FAITH is Love, the fruit of LOVE is Service, the fruit of SERVICE is Peace.”

Ministry

Dear _____, (Parishioner)

By now you have had the opportunity to make a commitment to prayer during the first phase of stewardship education. I am sure you have seen benefits in spending more time praying.

Another way to build your relationship with Jesus, is through active ministry and discipleship. Living your life with strong ties to your church and parish community will enhance your life.

I will be publishing articles in our bulletin. I ask you to read the articles carefully and prayerfully reflect upon the contents. The next article, "Ways to Serve" will also contain Gospel passages about how the Lord expects us to serve one another and will reflect upon two thousand years of the Catholic tradition of volunteer ministry. You will also be hearing a homily and one of our parishioners giving a presentation on this same topic.

Finally, I ask that you show your intention of embracing stewardship as a way of life by filling out your Ministry Commitment Cards and placing them in the offertory basket on Sunday, _____ (date). You will do this as a visible sign of your intention to follow Christ and His teachings.

I embrace and endorse the process of living our lives as God intended, as good stewards of his bounteous gifts. I ask you to join me in this ongoing process of stewardship and be open to the grace to respond in a loving way.

May God bless you and your loved ones and every member of the _____ parish family.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Ministry

Sample Follow-Up Letter

Dear _____,

I wrote to you a few weeks ago about our continuing journey of stewardship as a way of life through the study of Stewardship Ministry.

I was so deeply touched by many in this parish who chose to respond to the call for action through ministry in support of our stewardship process. Their involvement in ministry will produce graces for this parish that heretofore have not been seen.

I want this letter to serve as a gentle reminder that I have not, as yet, heard from you (and your family). I am writing to every member of our parish family who has not yet responded to our call to Stewardship of Ministry, hoping that all will respond. This stewardship process and this parish are not complete without you.

Please remember that any commitment you sign is a covenant between you and God. If for some reason you cannot fulfill your commitment, the issue is between you and God. You will not be judged here. I simply wish to remind you that the first step to becoming a steward of God's gifts is to make a commitment. If you have misplaced your cards, you can obtain more at the Church office or use the one enclosed here.

I ask you again to please become a part of stewardship as a way of life in our parish. If for some reason you choose not to, please be assured of my continued love and prayers for you and your family.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Ministry

Sample Thank-You Letter

Dear _____,

How generous you are with your gifts! I thank you for sharing these gifts with your brothers and sisters of _____.

Your commitment to Stewardship of Ministry will go a long way in building the Kingdom of God and saving souls right here in our faith community.

We will follow up your desire to serve with training and support. We, the staff, know that we are enablers only of the real parish ministers, you, the baptized who serve.

Thank you for your commitment to stewardship. Thank you for sharing His gifts. May He always bless you abundantly for your goodness.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”

STEWARDSHIP OF FINANCE



WAYS TO GIVE

- † **Bulletin Article**
- † **Sample Pastor Letter**
- † **Sample Pastor Follow-up Letter**
- † **Sample Pastor Thank You Letter**
- † **Thank You Bulletin Article**

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”



Ways to Give

A Call to Stewardship of Finance

*“Give and it shall be given...
For the measure you measure
with will be measured
back to you.”
Luke 6:38*

Did you ever notice how many people refer to their parish church as “my church”? Or call the priest “Father”? How many times in the mass there is reference to family; “coming together as God’s family, my brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries”; “I confess to almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters”; “Pray brethren.”

The reason is we are all of God’s children. We are the family of God. At the dawn of creation, God said, “It is not good that you are alone.” The Church is described as the People of God, and we see ourselves as one of a group to whose destiny we are all tied and whose welfare we share. We are family! This, too, is the reality of our Baptism. We are joined to Christ, the whole Christ, Christ and His people, the Church.

Need To Give – Out Of Gratitude

Jesus said, “There is more happiness in giving than receiving.” As good stewards we strive very hard to remember that the source of all our gifts is God. When we give “cheerfully” it is to fulfill our need to return to the Lord a portion of our financial blessings in gratitude, not because someone asks us to or out of a sense of duty. Stewardship of Finance can be a very touchy and sensitive area for some. They say, “Religion is not about money.” Yet the commitment to financial offerings is one of the most important expressions of what our faith means to us. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

Give To A Need

Just as we bear the responsibility for the welfare of our biological families, we too must share the responsibility for the support of our spiritual family... His people, the Church. Just as our root families need material things in order to live, so does the Church. This is because as long as we have bodies as well as souls, the Church will need material things in order to minister to us. We need churches in which to worship, receive the sacraments and to hear God’s word. We need schools for the religious instruction of children. We need hospitals, nursing homes and shelters in which to care for the abandoned, the poor, the sick, the aged. All of these things require money which has to come from the people of God. When you make an offering to your Church, you are sharing in works of religion and charity.

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”



Ways to Give

“They gave from their surplus wealth, but she gave from her want, all she had to live on.”

Mark 12:44

When we sincerely want to be a member of Christ’s Church, then we sincerely want to support it. When we say “Teach me your ways, O Lord” so that we can live our lives in imitation of Yours, then we must listen to His words with very open hearts and minds. The Lord’s teachings regarding money and our use of money could not be more forthright or specific.

The first step in supporting your Church is acknowledging that it needs support. Your pastor or administrator needs to budget. Envision what would happen to your budget, if your means of support (paycheck, pension, social security, rental income, etc.) would vary each time you received it, or worse, did not show up at all. How would you manage? Do you see the needs of the Church any differently? How can your parish leaders pay salaries and utility bills, provide services, maintain buildings, etc., if there is no clue as to what the income will be from week to week?

Stewardship of Finance calls for us to make our gifts to God satisfy three criteria:

Planned: We plan our gift to God so that it is not a happenstance but a committed and firm decision. We do not give to God from our leftovers but from our first fruits. Committed stewards or disciples find that when they put God first, they are somehow never left short—their needs are always taken care of. When you plan your gift and make your intentions known by signing a Commitment Card, the parish can use this valuable information to plan its budget so that it can minister to the needs of you, your family and the entire congregation.

Proportionate: Your level of financial giving is a personal decision. NO ONE will tell you what you should give. Scripture tells us, however, that “No one shall appear before the Lord empty-handed, but each of you with as much as he can give, in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, God has bestowed on you.” (Dt. 16:10, 17). Examine the giving guide you will receive and track the proportion you give to see what percentage of your income it represents. Do you consider your level to represent a proportionate share of your blessings? Many people find that their income has increased over the years, yet their contributions have not climbed proportionately. The Old Testament reveals how deeply and intimately the concept of giving to God was woven into the religious life of Israel. The elaborate system of first fruits, tithes and sacrificial offerings was established in acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty over His people. Tithes, first fruits and sacrificial offerings may be a bit intimidating to traditional Catholics but for it to be meaningful, it should be sacrificial. Don’t be intimidated! People who plan their gifts to God as a proportionate share of their income find peace, joy and security in their decision. You can never out-give God.

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”

Bulletin Article



Ways to Give

*“Let the man with two coats
give to him who has none.
The man who has food
should do the same.”*

Luke 3:11

Identifiable: Identifying yourself as a donor to your church is a smart decision. The church encourages you to use the offertory envelopes that are provided to you. This ensures two things: 1) the envelope is a tangible sign of your commitment to the support of the parish, and 2) it will enable the parish to operate in a business-like fashion and provide proper accounting for income tax purposes.

Finally, please remember that your stewardship of finance must be a prayerful, planned decision. It is and should be a reflection of your gratitude to a giving God. The level at which you give is entirely between you and God.

The important point is to commit to some level of giving and make your intentions known to your parish leader. Your commitment will be kept completely confidential but is necessary for planning and budgeting in the parish. Please turn in your intention cards on Commitment Sunday at offertory time as a visible sign of your personal and spiritual investment in your parish.



Finance

Sample Letter

Dear _____,

Earlier on, you received messages from me about Stewardship of Prayer and Ministry. Now I want to speak with you about another area of stewardship – Stewardship of Finance.

To many, speaking about money in Church is a very sensitive area. Remember though, Christ's teachings regarding our use of money are very forthright.

I will ask you to read the bulletin article regarding Stewardship of Finance. I ask you to receive its message with an open heart and mind. You will hear me and others speak from the pulpit about Stewardship of Finance. Likewise, I ask you to receive our messages openly.

Finally, I ask that you commit yourself to supporting our parish in a planned, proportionate and identifiable manner. You can do this by filling out and turning in the Commitment Card you have been provided with.

Remember that as a steward of God's financial blessings you should desire to share these gifts gratefully and proportionately. Certainly, your Church has a need to receive your financial support. More importantly, however, is your need to give as the Lord asks you to.

Committing to Stewardship of Finance is a very big decision. I ask you to pray with your family about this matter and collectively come to a decision.

I trust you in your decision and send my love and prayers to you and your family today and always.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Dear _____,

Many in our parish have responded generously to Stewardship of Finance, "Ways to Give."

This indicates to me that our parish family recognizes the importance of sharing the financial blessings the Lord has entrusted to them. Just as important is that they recognize the financial needs of the parish family. Their commitment to give enables us to continue, in an orderly manner, our services to the entire parish family.

Since I have not received a commitment from you yet, I wondered if you misplaced the card. I am taking the liberty of enclosing another for your use. I know you will want to join so many others at _____ parish in making a gift that is planned, proportionate and identifiable. Please turn in your commitment at your earliest convenience. I assure you that your response, whatever it is, will be held confidential.

May the Lord bless you and your family as you discern this matter. My love and prayers to you always.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Finance

Sample Thank-You Letter

Dear _____,

Thank you for your generous response to our Stewardship of Finance phase of our continuing journey to make stewardship a way of life in our parish.

While gifts of time and talent are very beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, so too is the sharing of financial blessings that ensure the perpetuity of His Church on earth.

You will be blessed immensely for this commitment to _____ parish. I, for my part, and the financial leaders of this parish will make an equal commitment to act as good stewards of these gifts. We will strive to manage these gifts in a frugal, prudent and accountable fashion. We will use them to make the lives of our parishioners better here and in heaven.

Thank you again for entrusting me with your gift. I bless you and your entire family, and all who you love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Finance

“There is more happiness in giving than receiving.”

Your generosity throughout our parish’s stewardship education process has been wonderful. We receive your gifts respectfully and humbly. Thank you for sharing with your brothers and sisters.

You took a step and dropped your pebble of goodness in the stream. From there it will radiate outward in never-ending circles of goodness to touch all around you. Your commitment to stewardship of prayer, ministry and finance will go a long way in developing good disciples and thus building the Kingdom of God right here in our community.

Thank you for your commitment to stewardship. Thank you for sharing your gifts. May He always bless you abundantly for your goodness.

*Develop Theme
of Stewardship*

Ways to Pray

A. Stewardship is a disciple's response or an expression of discipleship. Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be. They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God's many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.

B. Establish that the only way to be a disciple is to live according to the teachings of Christ. (John 8:31)

C. Explain that the teachings of Christ regarding stewardship are very specific. Sixteen of His 38 parables spoke of stewardship.

"Teach me, O Lord, Your Ways" (Psalm 86:11) Ways to Pray

A. What does the Lord teach us about prayer?

1. Refer to Matthew 7:7, 18-19, 21:22.
2. Recall the importance of prayer in the life of Jesus-after His Baptism. (Luke 3:21) He prayed before the selection of His apostles. (Luke 6:12)
3. We listen to Jesus through prayer.
4. We study Jesus' teachings by studying the Bible.
5. Through prayer we become disciples of Christ.

B. What does prayer have to do with stewardship?

1. Prayer is how we spend our time forming a close, more perfect relationship with God. Time is a gift from God.
2. Prayer opens our hearts, minds and souls to God's teachings.
3. Prayer converts us from being self-centered to God-centered.
4. Prayer helps us cope with the trials and temptations of life.
5. Prayer helps us to see the sufferings of others through the eyes of God.
6. Prayer helps us to recognize that we are stewards of God's gifts of time, talent and treasure and we must share these gifts in love and justice.
7. Prayer changes people and people change things.
8. Prayer calls us to action – to service and to ministry.

Ways to Serve

“Teach me, O Lord, Your Ways” (Psalm 86:11) Ways to Serve

- A. What does the Lord teach us about service and ministry?
1. Refer to:
Matthew 5:16, 10:42, 22:37
Mark 10:43-44
Luke 3:11, 6:38, 10:25-37, 19:8
John 9:4, 15:12, 16, 20:21, 21:15-17
 2. The call to serve is issued at Baptism and reinforced at Confirmation. This message of service continues throughout the Gospel and culminates in the most perfect example of service in His ritual of the washing of the feet at the Last Supper.
- B. What is Stewardship of Ministry?
What ways are we called to serve?
1. Stewardship of Ministry calls us to serve the needs of others using our God-given talents.
 2. Giving and using our talents in service to others draws us closer to God and makes us happy, joyful, and filled with an inner peace.
 3. Our families, our workplace, our parish community, our neighborhoods and city in which we live all have needs. We are called to respond to these needs by using our talents where they are most useful.
 4. Volunteering to use talents in the service to the Church parish helps to fulfill Jesus' mission – to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner and to preach the Good News.

Ways to Give

“Teach me, O Lord, Your Ways” (Psalm 86:11) Ways to Give

- A. What does the Lord teach us about giving?
1. Refer to:
Matthew 6:24
Mark 10:21, 12:44, 13:34
Luke 3:11, 6:38, 12:34, 48, 14:33, 16:13, 16:19-31, 19:8
John 6:27 % Acts 2:44-45, 4:34
 2. Financial or material blessings are a gift from a loving God.
 3. How we manage our financial gifts is a barometer of our level of faith.
 4. People who make a decision to give to God their first fruits and not the leftovers find that their faith is deepened, and rather than find themselves in a pinch they find that they become enriched both spiritually and materially.

B. What is Stewardship of Finance?

1. Stewardship of Finance calls us to take stock of our financial resources, acknowledge that our financial assets are gifts from God only on loan for our use here on earth, and that we are required to dedicate a portion of these gifts to further God's kingdom.

2. We have a need to support our spiritual parish family, just as we support the welfare of our biological family.

3. Supporting the Church enables it to perform works of religion and charity.

4. That our giving should be:

a. **PLANNED:** If it is not planned it won't happen. Planning allows us to give from "first fruits," not leftovers. Does God deserve leftovers?

b. **PROPORTIONATE:** Assess your current level of giving. Is it proportionate to your income? A giving guide will help to determine what percentage of your income is being given back to God. Does it properly reflect your gratitude to God for His blessings? People should strive to give at least 5 percent and eventually work towards the Biblical tithe (10 percent).

c. **IDENTIFIABLE:** People should display their membership in their parish with pride by using an offertory envelope as a symbol of solidarity. Using envelopes enables the parish to operate in a businesslike fashion and provide you with proper accounting for income tax purposes.

5. Make a commitment. Making your intentions known to your parish financial leaders assists in the planning and budgeting process. Without your committed and continued support, the Church cannot exist and run in an orderly fashion.

*Tips for Lay
Presenter*

Lay Speaker

The lay presentation portion of the Stewardship process (which is scheduled the weekend following the pastor's Stewardship homily), plays a very meaningful role in the Stewardship education process. Parishioners can readily identify with or aspire to the testimony of those who live the lives of Christian Stewards.

The following are key elements and points that should be covered in a lay presentation.

1. The pastor should properly introduce the lay presenter and give a brief background of that individual's contributions to the parish, community and his/her profession or vocation. This prevents the lay presenter from having to boast of his/her own accomplishments which may prove embarrassing to some.
2. The presenter should begin the talk by properly defining Stewardship in his/her own words.
3. During the presentation do not suggest that practicing Stewardship is a response to the needs of the Parish. Emphasize that it is a grateful and individual response to a loving and giving God.
4. The presenter should share his/her involvement in Church ministry, school activities, community service projects, and must describe the feelings, the joy, the rewards he/she personally experienced as a result of his/her involvement in order to be an effective witness. (i.e. he/she has made new friends, feel a sense of belonging or ownership, learned new skills, discovered hidden talents, felt closer to God, other rewards he/she may have experienced that can be directly attributed to his/her service to the Lord and others, etc.).
5. The presenter should try to incorporate personal anecdotes concerning lives he/she may have touched through his/her ministry (i.e. a child, the poor, the elderly, the un-churched, the sick, etc).
6. The presenter should be one who tithes or regularly contributes a proportionate share of his/her income to the parish and should be able to candidly share the joy and rewards of giving.
7. Discuss how your family practices stewardship through gifts of time, talent and treasure. (Examples might include spring cleaning and giving discarded clothes and other items to the poor, assistance given to an elderly neighbor, participation in environmental clean-up activities, coaching a little league team, etc.)

*Tips for
Preparing and
Delivering
a Talk*

8. Conclude the talk by encouraging fellow parishioners to generously contribute their time, talent and treasure by participating in the parish's call to Stewardship of Prayer, Ministry and Finance.

9. Don't forget to ask! Tell parishioners they should involve themselves in this effort, and do so visibly by filling out Commitment Cards of Prayer, Ministry and Finance and place them in the collection basket on Commitment weekend.

1. Jot down thoughts and personal experiences as they relate to the different points to be covered in "Tips for the Lay Presenter" (previous page).

2. Take these notes and begin to write your talk out word for word.

3. Sit down with your pastor or a Stewardship committee member and edit the talk. Ascertain that you are including all of the points you want covered.

4. Practice, practice, practice! Practice the talk aloud in front of a mirror. Deliver it to your spouse, family or good friend and ask for their critique.

5. If possible, practice your talk in Church using the sound system.

6. Strive to deliver the talk in a sincere, enthusiastic and friendly manner.

*Scriptural
References
Relating To
Stewardship*

New Testament

Mt. 6:21
Lk. 6:38
Lk. 15:12
Lk. 16:31
Acts 4:34
Acts 20:35
Rom. 12:6-8
1 Cor. 4:1
1 Cor. 16:1
2 Cor. 8
2 Cor. 9:6-8
1 Tim. 6:7-9
James 2:14-17
James 4:3
1 Pet. 4:8-10

Old Testament

Le. 23:30
Dt. 14:22 & 29
Dt. 16:10, 16-17
Dt. 26:1-4
Prov. 3:9
Prov. 11:24
Sirach 35:7-10
Mal. 3:8-10

**Parables of Jesus that deal with
money and possessions:**

The Two Debtors (Lk. 7:41-43)
The Hidden Treasure (Mt. 13:44)
The Costly Pearl (Mt. 13:45)
The Unmerciful Servant (Mt. 18:23-35)
The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37)
The Friend at Midnight (Lk. 11:5-8)
The Rich Fool (Lk. 12:16-21)
The Barren Fig Tree (Lk. 13:6-9)
The Tower Builder (Lk. 14:28-30)
The King Contemplating a Campaign (Lk. 14:31-33)
The Lost Sheep (Lk. 15:3-7)
The Lost Coin (Lk. 15:8-10)
The Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32)
The Unjust Steward (Lk. 16:1-8)
The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31)
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk. 18:9-14)
The Generous Employer (Mt. 20:1-16)
The Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:1-12; Mt. 21:33-46; Lk. 20:9-19)
The Servant Entrusted with Supervision (Mt. 24:45-51; Lk. 12:42-46)
The Talents (Mt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:12-27)
Sheep and Goats (Mt. 25:31-45)

“TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS”



Ways to Pray



Ways to Serve



Ways to Give

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*A Christian steward is grateful for God's gifts,
manages these gifts responsibly and
shares them in justice and love.*