

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 1

Stewardship ... A Basic Beginning

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for this day and all that you have given us. It is our joy and honor to serve you and others, and to do your will. Please bless our efforts and open our hearts to hear and learn your word, so that we might be better stewards during our time here on earth. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Getting Started

When you hear the word stewardship, what comes to mind?

What is a steward?

The word “steward” is an old English word derived from term sty-warden. The work of the sty-warden was to manage the ruler’s meat supply! This was the word that the translators of the King James Version chose to render as the Greek word oikonomos. This Greek noun comes from the root word oikonmia, which means household. This Greek concept is the one from which we derive the word economy. A steward is one who manages or administers someone else’s household affairs. He or she is a trustee or an agent for the benefit of the owner. A steward is the one who does the work of stewardship.

The steward is one who manages someone else’s household. This is especially true of the Christian as we have been called to manage the household affairs of the world, for the sake of the true owner, God. We will learn more about this ownership in session two.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod defines Christian stewardship as “the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God’s family, the Church in managing all of life and life’s resources for God’s purposes.”

1 Cor. 4:1–2

The Ministry of Apostles

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 2

Stewardship ... Created for This

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for all creation and the life you have given us. You made man in your image so that we might serve you and tend to your creation. Please strengthen our faith and guide our efforts to align with your will. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Review

What is a steward? A steward is one who manages the belongings of others in accordance with the will of the owner. Faithfulness is the only godly standard for stewardship.

Owner/Stewardship Relationship

Who is the ultimate owner? Who is the steward?

The Psalmist says that the earth and the fullness thereof belongs to the Lord. This includes all who dwell in it. The Lord is the owner because He made it all (Ps. 24:1–2). It is the owner who gets to determine purpose and use of that which is owned. The steward serves on behalf of the owner. His or her will, in order to be faithful, is only to use the owned item in a manner that is in keeping with the will of the owner.

What is the fundamental difference between an owner and a steward? The owner is the one that has all the responsibility and privilege. The owner’s will is the only one that matters when it comes to the purpose and use of that which is owned. The owner has a much greater investment than the steward. When the heat is on, the owner may risk injury and even death for his possessions.

Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 3

Stewardship ... An Ongoing Crisis

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for preserving us amidst our unfaithfulness. We often fall astray and need your guiding light and forgiveness. Please forgive us of our sins and enable us to be better stewards of your creation. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Review

God claims ownership of all things by creation. One of the central teachings of the Bible is that God created everything. The biblical teaching is not that God created everything and then handed ownership off to someone else. Mankind is the steward of His creation. The stewards will, to be faithful, is to tend to creation according to God’s will.

The First Stewardship Crisis

Genesis 3:1-7 recounts the “fall into sin.” By disobeying God’s command, the reality is that this fall into sin is really a crisis in the relationship between Creator and creature, owner and steward. This crisis is also marked by the chronic forgetfulness of who is the ultimate owner and who was created to be the steward. The serpent was instrumental in setting the stage for this forgetfulness, but is not to blame. That blame rests squarely on the once perfect shoulders of the man and the woman in the Garden.

The Ongoing Consequences

In what way has humanity continued to repeat this original stewardship crisis?

The owner/steward authority structure finds discord in the Garden and today as a result. The sinful nature within us will continue to seek to please ourselves rather than God. This is a struggle that every sinner/saint steward will struggle with every day they live in this world. But the Owner gives us hope.

Genesis 3:15

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 4

Stewardship ... Redeemed and Restored

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for sending your Son to save us from our sins. Help us to live out our forgiveness by following your commands and building one another up. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Review

God is the owner of all things and mankind are his stewards by following his will and tending to his creation. The owner/stewardship relationship had its first crisis during the “fall into sin” in Gen. 3. As an ongoing consequence, mankind experiences broken relationships with God, each other, and creation.

Redemption: God’s Answer

Between our sins and judgment is the greatest gift humanity has been called to steward: the forgiveness through Jesus Christ. The Gospel is ultimately what humanity is to be stewards of, going forward from the Garden. Through the Gospel the curses of the stewardship crisis are undone, and the renewal of the stewards will be accomplished.

How are we saved?

We are saved by grace. This grace is totally undeserved. The Creator and owner of creation is the giver of grace. This grace has been poured out on all fallen humanity in the person and work of Jesus.

The Relationship Between Redemption and Stewardship

This grace restores all fallen stewards to their original relationship with the Lord as owner. Christian stewardship is not an activity that we originate by ourselves. God is the actor! It is the Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us in the one true faith. Stewardship begins and ends with the Gospel. We act in grateful and faithful response to the grace of God revealed in His Son.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 5

Stewardship ... Of The Gospel

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for this day and for the salvation we have through your son Jesus. In your wisdom you have restored our relationship with you as the owner and we as your stewards. Please bless our efforts and enable us to share the Gospel in our words and actions. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Review

What is the difference between an owner and a steward? Who are stewards, and who are owners?

We are saved by totally undeserved grace. The Creator and owner of creation gives grace. This grace was poured out in the person and work of Jesus. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works and faithfully manage the affairs of God’s creation. The Holy Spirit is the active agent in stewardship.

Stewardship: The Gospel at Work Through Our Lives

Read John 3:16.

This “Gospel in a nutshell” captures the idea that it is love, not crime and punishment, that motivated the Lord’s mercy. It is ALL creation that longs for the Gospel. The love and mercy of God is at the very heart of this Gospel. In the death and resurrection of Jesus all of the relationships that were destroyed in the first stewardship crisis have been restored.

Only after the mercies of God in the Gospel have had their effect on us can we then begin to live the life of worship and service to which we have been called. The steward is to present his whole life to God as a sacrifice in an act of worship.

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 6

Stewardship ... You Can't Serve Two Masters

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, through you all things were made. In our sin we broke our relationship with you as the owner of creation. In your love you saved us through your Son’s death and resurrection. Please bless our time, talents, and treasures so that we might thank, praise, and worship you in a way pleasing to your will. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Review

What is a steward? What is an owner?

The Gospel reorders our stewardship from that which was centered on ourselves to that which is centered on the word and will of God. God enables us to live a life of worship and stewardship.

Stewardship: Serving the True Master

What is the connection between what you treasure and where your heart is focused?

Matthew 6:19-24

[Jesus says,] “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

1 Timothy 6:10

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 7

Stewardship ... Of Creation for Our Neighbors

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, please be with us in our thoughts, words, and deeds, as we strive to love and serve you and our neighbors. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Review

An owner is the person who holds the rights and privileges over something. A steward is one who manages the belongings of others in accordance with the will of the owner.

Money and treasures are NOT evil. Money can be a great blessing to those who are able to use it as a resource for helping others, as they are stewards of it for the glory of God. What is evil is the way that human beings view, use and idolize money.

Stewardship: Serving the Neighbor

Creation participates in the worship of the Lord. We are told throughout the Scriptures that creation declares the handiwork of God. While it does not necessarily proclaim the saving work of the Gospel, it does testify to who the Lord is in making and preserving all creation. Working and keeping creation is yet another way that we preserve the worship of the Lord. We could almost say that caring for creation is like caring for the person in the pew next to us so that they can add their voice to the praise of the Lord.

What does stewardship of creation for the sake of others look like today?

The Lord does not see us externally. He doesn’t see us as Americans, by our race or our socio-economic condition. He sees us in terms of our spiritual reality. We are lost without His intervention. As stewards, when we reflect that image by showing unexpected care for others who might even see us as an enemy, it gives opportunity to show love. This care is not a replacement for sharing the Gospel message. However, it is key in that it allows us, and in some cases earns us, the opportunity to speak. Love is an action, not a hollow philosophy. God’s love moves us to action for the sake of others. Our love can be used by the Lord to open a door for sharing the ultimate message of love: Jesus.

Luke 10:33-34

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship

SUGGESTIONS FOR OPENING A MEETING

Session 8

Stewardship ... In Time for Eternity

Opening Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for this day and all that you have given us. Thank you for your redeeming grace through the Gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Please bless our efforts as we strive to be better stewards of your creation, including all people. We await the day we will see you face to face in eternity. In Jesus’ name, Amen”

Review

As caretakers of the world and each other, we are to follow the Owner’s (God’s) will while exercising our stewardship. Through the Holy Spirit we are enabled to participate in the worship of the Lord by offering ourselves as a sacrifice through our time, talents, and treasures.

Stewardship: In the Present and Forevermore

Time is a creation of the Lord. Therefore, it is owned by Him. As stewards, the way we invest our time, which is really the only truly nonrenewable resource we have, is to reflect the Owner’s (the Lord’s) will. It is also important for us to invest this time as faithful stewards because there is only a limited amount of time over which we are to be faithful stewards. It can be seen as insignificant on the grand scale. However, wisely stewarded time, used for the sake of the Gospel can be stewardship used by the Holy Spirit to change someone’s eternity. Now that is REAL stewardship!

Matthew 25:22-26, 29

The Parable of the Talents

[Jesus says,] “And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.’”

Source and all references: <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/stewardship-basics-bible-study-1/>

Prepared for Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School leadership by the Board of Stewardship