

A HEART FOR STEWARDSHIP vol. 1



Dear Partners in ministry in the Pacific Southwest District of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

Back in 1996 I was privileged to be called to serve as the Director of Stewardship Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. When I began that work I was so thankful for all the Stewardship treasures that were already in place when I took over my new and special calling.

One, in the six years that I served on the Executive Staff in Iowa District West, I got to know and appreciate the wonderful stewardship leaders in the 35 Districts of our Church body. When you are just getting started at something new it is great to have some good partners to help you through the challenges of your work. In Stewardship Ministry we really need each other to do the best we can.

Two, when I began my work in LCMS Stewardship Ministry, I found a treasure that was very helpful for me. That treasure was the LCMS Definition of Stewardship that had been developed over the previous years.

“Christian stewardship is 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.” That definition is made up of only 29 words but those words say so much about what it means to be a Christian steward. Let me take it apart piece by piece.

“Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity.” When many people hear and think about stewardship, they don’t often think of stewardship as a free and joyous activity. After all, isn’t stewardship about giving of your time, talents and treasure? Yes, stewardship is about giving of yourself and your resources, so how can it be described as “free and joyous”?

When I was serving as a pastor at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Snohomish, Washington, we were part of the Northwest District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. That district included the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

At one of our pastor’s conference I heard about a stewardship story from one of the Alaska pastors. He said that in his village there was an Eskimo named Kuniak. One morning he heard a knock on his door and when he opened it there was Kuniak who was holding a large salmon in his hands.

Kuniak told the pastor that he always gave 10% of everything he got back to God, and that he had been fishing and caught the beautiful salmon he was holding in his hands. With a big smile he offered it to the pastor with these words, ***“Since you represent God in this village, I am giving this salmon to you.”***

The pastor was grateful but still surprised by this offer. He looked carefully at Kuniak and said, ***“Kuniak, that is very kind of you, and I heard what you said about giving back a tenth to God, but I only see this one beautiful salmon. Where are the other nine?”***

“Oh,” Kuniak said with a big smile as he was rushing away, ***“the other nine are still in the lake and I am going back to get them.”***

When we realize that God is really the giver of all gifts, then, like Kuniak, we can be cheerful givers with the confidence that God’s storehouse of blessings includes more than we can ever imagine. One of the members of the congregation I served in Washington liked to say that “you can never out give the Lord.” I agree.

So, Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of “the child of God.” Jesus Christ loved us sinners so much that he left the bliss and glory of heaven to carry out the work of salvation that his Father willed him to do. Through the saving work of Jesus who went all the way to death on a cross and burial in a tomb to pay the ransom for all our sins and rose again from the dead on that first Easter to assure us that we are the redeemed children of God as 1 John 3 tells us so eloquently.

Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God’s family, the church. As stewards we are surrounded by many redeemed children of God, especially the members of the congregations where we actively belong. We are encouraged by fellow members and are also an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christian stewardship is 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. Stewardship is not just about the giving of money but about the managing of all of life and life’s resources as God’s stewards. There is a really important truth here. We often think of ourselves as owners rather than managers. Owners do anything they want to with what they consider their own. Christian Stewards realize that God is the rightful owner and we are really the managers of that which really belongs to him. This is a very important for Christian stewards to keep in heart and mind as they practice their stewardship together with fellow stewards in the congregations to which they belong.

Christian stewardship is 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’ purposes. ***“For God’s purposes”*** encourages us to remember that everything we do as Christian stewards, whether that is giving of time, talents, abilities and money and possessions, is best done for God’s purposes.

One of the first things that I did as the LCMS Director of Stewardship Ministry was to recruit some excellent stewardship leaders in our Synod to work with me in developing the eight Biblical Stewardship Principles that are now in place.

Future stewardship articles will take a closer look at each of those principles and some resources to help us learn, practice and teach true Christian stewardship.

You can find these principles and many more high quality stewardship resources by going to www.lcms.org and clicking on “Resources” and then scrolling down to “Stewardship Ministry Resources” where you will find all kinds of helps for teaching, preaching and practicing Christian Stewardship.

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