

Stewardship

"You are the salt of the earth,"

Jesus tells us this in Matthew. "You should rejoice in your troubles and difficulties as you proclaim the Gospel," He tells us in Luke. Why? So that others may see what you do and in so seeing, they, too, will be drawn to God. There is the prophecy, there is the demand, there is the task.

Our habit of saying someone else will do it, our habit of saying we are too busy, all of those habits, and many others, make the salt tasteless and the light useless. Those habits keep you ... the valuable person ... invisible to the world. And when you are invisible, the Gospel goes nowhere.

***Our habit of saying
someone else will do it
makes the salt tasteless
and the light useless.***

When the work of this church is invisible due to keeping our talents and skills or our contributions in the closet, the Gospel goes nowhere.

What is it that keeps you and your abilities and talents invisible?


A cranky man went to his rabbi one day. The doctors told him there was nothing wrong with him. Maybe his clergyperson could help.

As they chatted, the rabbi, who knew this man was rich, took him by the hand and led him to the window. "What do you see?" he asked. The man looked out the window and replied "I



see men and women and children going up and down the street."

The rabbi then took the man to a mirror. "What do you see?" "I see myself." "Interesting," commented the rabbi. "In the window there is glass; in the mirror there is glass. But through the window, you see others, in the mirror, only yourself. The difference is that behind the mirror is a coating of silver that prevents you from seeing others. Maybe all the silver in your life is getting in the way of your vision."

You are valued by God. You are valuable treasure to God. But do not keep your talent, your ability, your money hidden. Use them. Begin by seeing what you can do for your church. 

***Most of us
would agree
that we could be
better stewards of
our time than we
are. It's not so hard
to kill an hour - no
matter how limited the
supply - if it just be-
longs to me. But if it's
time for God, hadn't
I better think twice
- do something with
it? How about giving
some time to help with
church needs?***




Giving proportionately between you, your family and God. The challenge to each of us is to decide on a level of giving which makes sense for our situation and that truly reflects our gratefulness to God for the gifts we have individually received.



Carl Quizzical challenged me, saying, “I don’t find that word STEWARDSHIP anywhere in the Bible! Therefore I can’t support your program.

“I congratulated Carl on reading the Bible so intently, but agreed that the word doesn’t appear. I indicated the two parables that establish the concept of the “Faithful Steward.” Then I said that all Christians are God’s stewards; trusted servants of our Lord. In order to respond to the love from God, Christians want to know what are their obligations; what are their duties as trusted servants. The teaching of *Stewardship* seeks to answer those questions.

The duty of *Service* to church and to our fellowman is commonly recognized, but less commonly practiced. Bad experiences or the fear thereof tend to callous the natural compassion of people; they shrink from becoming involved. We need to overcome this inhibition and to reach out to others.

The duty of *Giving* becomes in many minds merely the giving of money. They need to understand that first they give *themselves* to Christ. Any giving that follows becomes an expression of our love to Christ. 

Stewardship isn’t just for adults! Emily is a ten year old fifth grader who saw a need and did something about it.

A few days into the new school year, Emily noticed one classmate lacked the necessary school supplies. Emily told her mother about it and said this lack was hindering the work her classmate could accomplish. Both girls are in a new magnet school that demands much from the students. A lack of equipment only adds frustration to an already accelerated pace. So Emily and her mother quietly bought supplies for this child. Emily put them in her friend’s desk with a note saying, “Surprise! Emily.” Her friend was delighted with the gifts! Now the two girls are studying and learning together on an equal footing.

Good stewardship emphasizes using our prayers, presence, gifts, and service as God would have us use them, seven days a week. Having received everything from God, we give back with sincere humility and appreciation. Even children can find ways to do this. Emily’s stewardship was not just the gift of school supplies, but also the gifts of friendship and caring. Additionally, helping her friend to have a better year at school also helps her friend to be a better steward of talents and abilities she too has been given. And that’s a nice ripple effect of good stewardship.







We bury our talent, or the grace given to us, by neglecting to use it: or possibly by the fear of making a mistake, or possibly from the vanity that is unwilling to do anything unless it is showy or great.

People throughout the ages have heard the call to be the salt of the earth, but sometimes become afraid of losing their saltiness and withdraw from community, church, even family. They bury their grace and end up with their fears becoming reality.

Invest in others

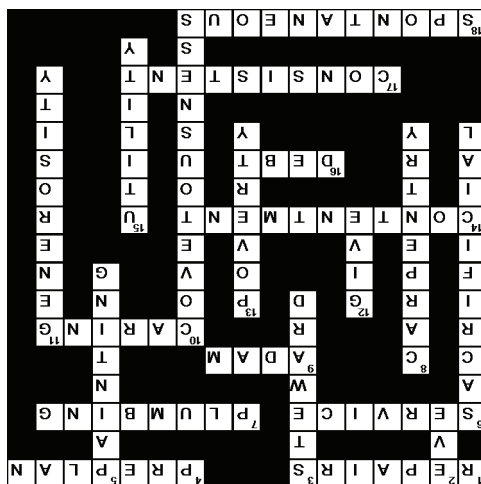
The talents that God so generously invests in us are for our own healing, growth, reconciliation and transformation. God wants us to be all that we can be: wants us to be righteous; right with ourselves, right with others, right with God. But God invests in us so that we can invest in others. It is to be shared in a handclasp, a smile, a shared tear, a listening ear.

The grace we have received is to be invested in others as we tutor children in after-school programs, help with the many things that are needed to be done in our church, or to drive an elderly person to the store or doctor's office. *Don't bury your talent!* 

When God finished making the earth and the heavens, he said: "Let us make man in our image and likeness." And he made them male and female. God shaped humankind in the likeness of himself, the artisan, the worker-God. Then he charged the race, male and female, with the task of transforming the earth, of shaping it in their own image. What emerges from Scripture, therefore, is the picture of humankind, not as homo sapiens, but homo artifex - the craftsman. Work is not something to do. *It is stewardship of talents.* It is who we are. It is the centerpiece of our spiritual life. 



Our gifts honor the Lord and are an expression of our love. While the church budget is important, our offering is an opportunity for us to truly thank our heavenly Father for all he has given us. If we give in relation to what we've received, there will always be plenty to pay the bills, too.

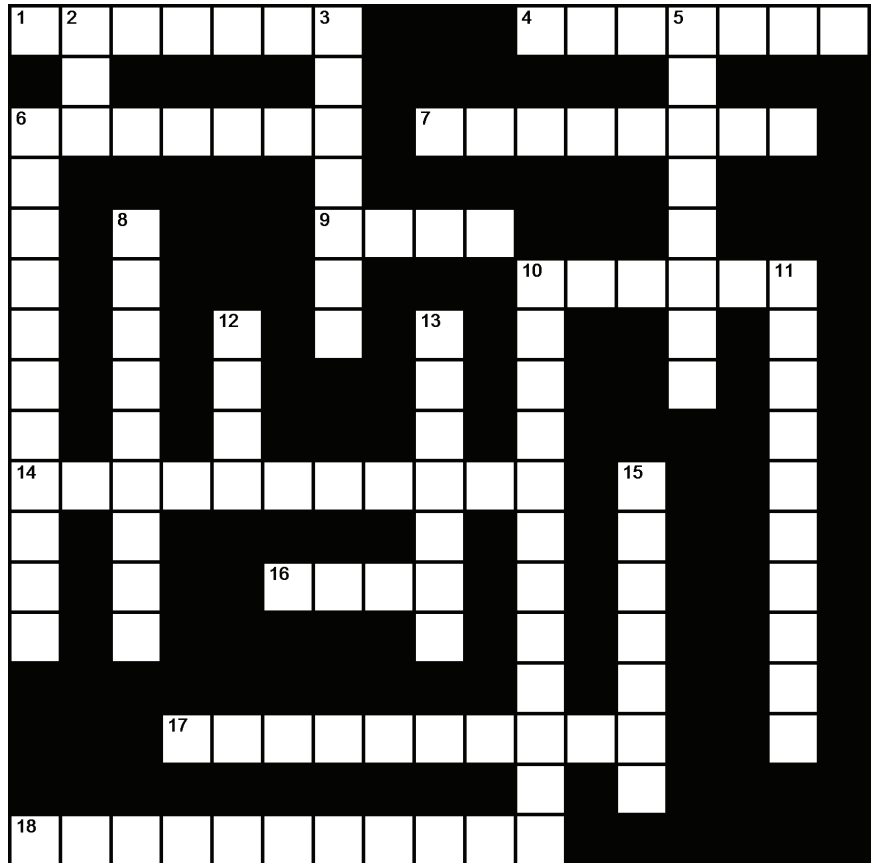


Crossword - Solution

Stewardship Crossword Puzzle

Across

1. Good stewards contribute their skills to keep the church like new.
4. Helps reduce debt from purchasing gifts.
6. Do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)
7. Good stewards contribute their skills to prevent leaks in church.
9. First male steward. (Genesis 2:15-20)
10. Old Testament tradition that Jesus demonstrated.
14. Satisfied by what we have. (Phil. 4:11-13)
16. Results from purchasing Christmas gifts that one can't afford.
17. Pattern of giving practiced by good stewards.
18. Inconsistent pattern of giving.



Down

2. First female steward. (Genesis 2:15-20)
3. Manager of God's property.
5. Good stewards contribute their skills to beautify the church with color.
6. Wise stewardship of every resource. (Phil. 3:7-8)
8. Good stewards contribute their skills to repair wooden structures in the church.
10. Characteristic of an unfaithful steward.
11. Act of giving to others.
12. It is more blessed to _____ than to receive. (Acts 20:35)
13. A lack of material resources.
15. Good stewards contribute so the church can pay gas and electric bills.

