

Stewardship in Action: The Fabric of Christian Life

AGENDA

- Stewardship: Why and What
- Four Pillars of Stewardship
- How to Call Forth People to Respond
- Practical Action Steps

WHY STEWARDSHIP?

- Stewardship is at the heart of the Word of God
- Stewardship and discipleship are two sides of the same coin. They should never be pitted against one another; rather, they support each other
- Discipleship focuses on answering our call to "follow Jesus"
- Jesus was a Good Steward
 - Matthew 28:18 - Jesus said, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
 - Jesus is a good steward of all that the Father gives him
- To be good disciples, we must be good stewards
- We need to talk about stewardship

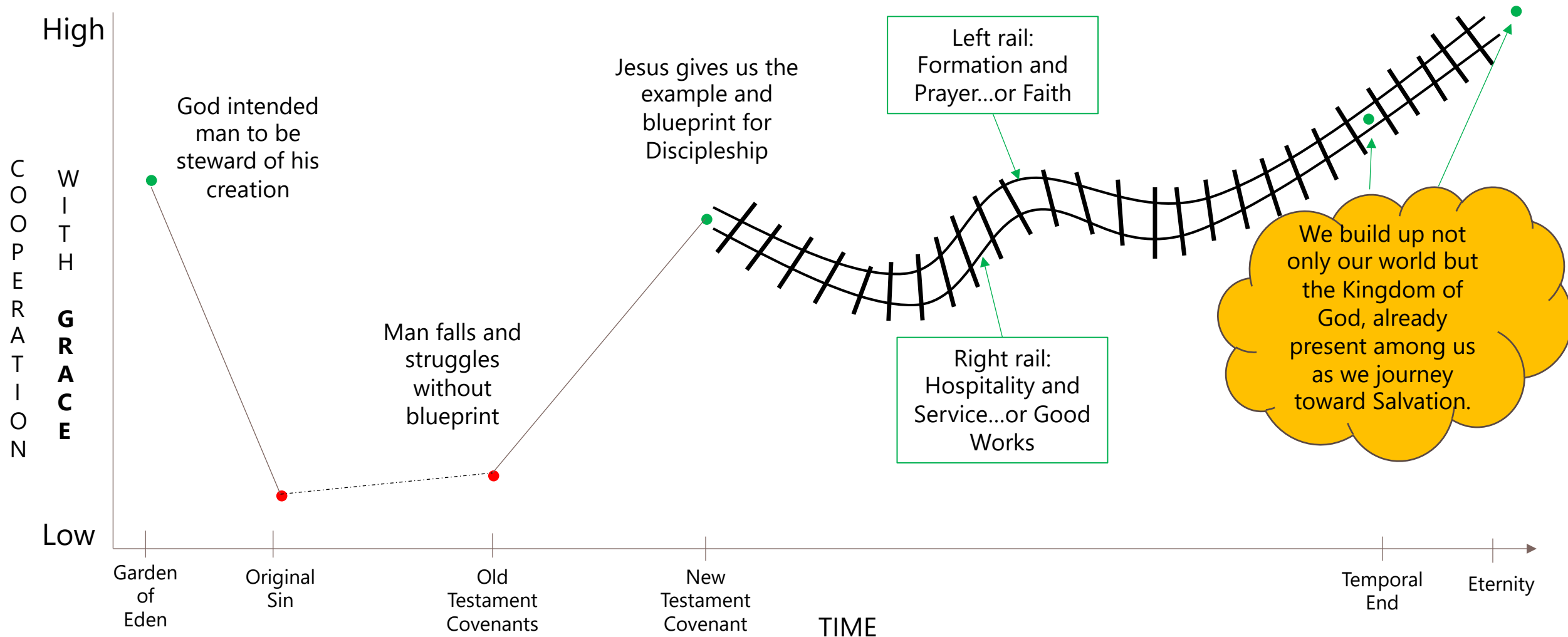


WHY STEWARDSHIP?

- Stewardship is mentioned before discipleship in the Bible. Before there was sin, God meant for us to be stewards of his creation
 - Genesis 2:15 - *"The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it."*
- Discipleship enters the story after sin. Now instead of walking in the Garden of Eden "with God" we "follow God" in hopes of our salvation.
 - Luke 9:23 - *"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*
- The Bible is the textbook for Christian stewardship



SALVATION HISTORY: ON TRACK W/STEWARDSHIP



WHY STEWARDSHIP?

- Jesus is our greatest teacher
- His life, death and resurrection, exemplify the meaning of stewardship
- God wills for us to respond by following Jesus, by being good stewards
- Stewardship in my life (*fill in a title to que the topic*)

What is Stewardship?

Public Survey

- When asked “What is Christian stewardship?” Most people in the pews would respond in one of two ways
 - It is about asking people for money for the church. (Far from the truth)
 - It is the act of sharing our time, talent and treasure. (True but only part of the idea)
- It is a holistic approach to living a Christian life

Definition

- Webster’s version:
 - The conducting, supervising, or managing of something, especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care
- Catholic version:
 - Christian Stewards, receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly and return them with increase to the Lord
- Let’s break this definition down

Receiving God's Gifts Gratefully

- We can only receive a gift when we recognize it comes from someone else
 - Otherwise we are taking it
- When we recognize something is a gift, the right response is, "Thank You!"
 - **Personal story here**
- What are some of the gifts from God you recognize in your lives?
 - Family, health, clothes, job, home, freedom
 - What about Sacraments?
- As Christian stewards, we acknowledge that all good things come from God



Cultivating God's Gifts Responsibly

- A steward is someone who takes care of someone else's things
 - Daycare providers take care of our children
 - Financial brokers take care of our money
 - Good farmers take care of the land
- Proverbs 29:19 - "Those who cultivate their land will have plenty of food, but those who engage in idle pursuits will have plenty of want."
 - We should not let our gifts go to waste
 - We ought to develop or enhance our gifts in every reasonable way
 - **Example from personal life**
- *Luke 13:6-9* - **The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree.** The gardener (a steward) asked to cultivate the tree one more year
- How are we called to cultivate our gifts ?



Share God's Gifts Lovingly

- As disciples we are called to share our gifts with others
- To love others is to love Jesus
 - Matthew 25: 31-46 - The Judgment of the Nations
 - The Corporal Works of Mercy
- Love is what disciples do
 - John 13:35-35 - "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
- We love by sharing our gifts, by sharing ourselves, by sharing Jesus



Return God's Gifts with Increase to the Lord

- The master entrusts three servants with various amounts of talents
- Two servants increased their talents one servant was fearful and buried his ???
- **What Does It Mean?** God is the master. The talents represent all the gifts and abilities he has given to us
 - We must share what God has blessed us with
 - He wants it back with increase – dignity of work
- How do we increase God's gifts?
 - Marriage – having children



Jesus is the Greatest Steward and Example



- **Gift:** Jesus was given the gift of becoming human through the “yes” of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Jesus cultivated his life responsibly by learning, experiencing, and growing
 - Luke 2:52 - Finding of Jesus in the Temple
- **Action:** Jesus shared his life lovingly
 - He healed people, blessed them, preached to them
- Jesus returned his life to God with increase through his death and resurrection

SECTION TWO: FOUR PILLARS

"Whether you eat or drink, or
whatever you do, do everything
for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31)



Hospitality - *Christian Kindness*

- Definition/Scripture reference
 - “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ Himself.
 - Hospitality is about being welcoming and building community
 - It is a major tool in evangelization
- Examples?
- What other opportunities do you see to extend hospitality?
- Barriers to hospitality
 - Different cultures in the same parish
 - Changing of social etiquette
 - How do we lovingly welcome yet teach standards



Prayer - Heart-to-Heart with God

- Definition / Scripture
 - Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian.
 - "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God" *Phil 4:6*
 - Healthy prayer life should include communal, personal and family prayer
- Examples: How are you already engaging in prayer?
- What are other opportunities for you/your parish to engage in or encourage prayer?
- Barriers to Prayer
 - Lack of time – Current world offers many distractions
 - Understanding how to pray



Formation - Continuous Conversion

- Definition / Scripture
 - St. John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God.
 - Formation does not stop with Confirmation, but is a journey to more deeply understand God's laws and church doctrine
 - Before you can spread the Good News to others you have to believe in it and experience God's love for yourself
- Examples: How are you/your parish already engaging in formation?
- What would be some other opportunities to engage in formation?
- Barriers to Formation – Hectic pace of life and pride



Service - Love in Action

- Definition/Scripture
 - St. James wrote, "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works?"
 - Pillar is all about Time, Talent and Treasure (T3)
 - Helping or doing work for someone with an aspect of sacrifice
- Examples: How are you/your parish already engaging in service?
- What would be some other opportunities to engage in service?
- Final Thoughts:
 - Four Pillars very interdependent – Evangelizing, Community
 - Think of parish and greater community
 - Most often the biggest barrier is distraction from the secular world



SECTION THREE: CALLING PEOPLE TO RESPOND

"A single act of pure love pleases
Me more than a thousand
imperfect prayers"

St. Faustina (from a vision
of Jesus)



7 Step Process: A Checklist for T3 Engagement

1. Personal Witness – Stewardship, not a program, but way of life
 - Clergy, religious and lay people need to share their journey in stewardship and how it has changed them
 - Don't underestimate examples set by pastor/bishop
2. Commitment of Leadership – Starts with the Pastor
 - Need an active Stewardship Committee
 - Responsible for stewardship formation and education
 - Oversight of parish efforts to promote gifts of time, talent and treasure
 - Collaborative involvement of many is essential for success
3. Hospitality, Evangelization, and Outreach – Indicator of vitality
 - If looking for T3, need to demonstrate that they are welcoming
 - Able to serve the needs of others
 - Committees should look for some projects unrelated to Church



7 Step Process: A Checklist for T3 Engagement

4. Communication and Education – Necessary to “tell our story”

- Important to augment traditional print with new media
- Competing for time and attention – make it count
- Consider use of professionals for a communications plan
- Don't underestimate new training materials as a recruiting tool for volunteers

5. Gifts of Time and Talent – Sure sign of health and vitality

- People have many demands on time and energy – need to recruit
- Need to invest in volunteers with training
- Show recognition and appreciation for efforts – a thank you goes a long way
- Don't let programs for volunteers be overshadowed by efforts to secure gifts of treasure



7 Step Process: A Checklist for T3 Engagement

6. Treasure – “Aspire not to have more, but be more” *St. Oscar Romero*

- A positive response in step 1-5 positions a community to encourage gifts of treasure for mission and ministry
- Fund-raising methods should reinforce stewardship themes of gratitude and returning to the Lord w/ increase

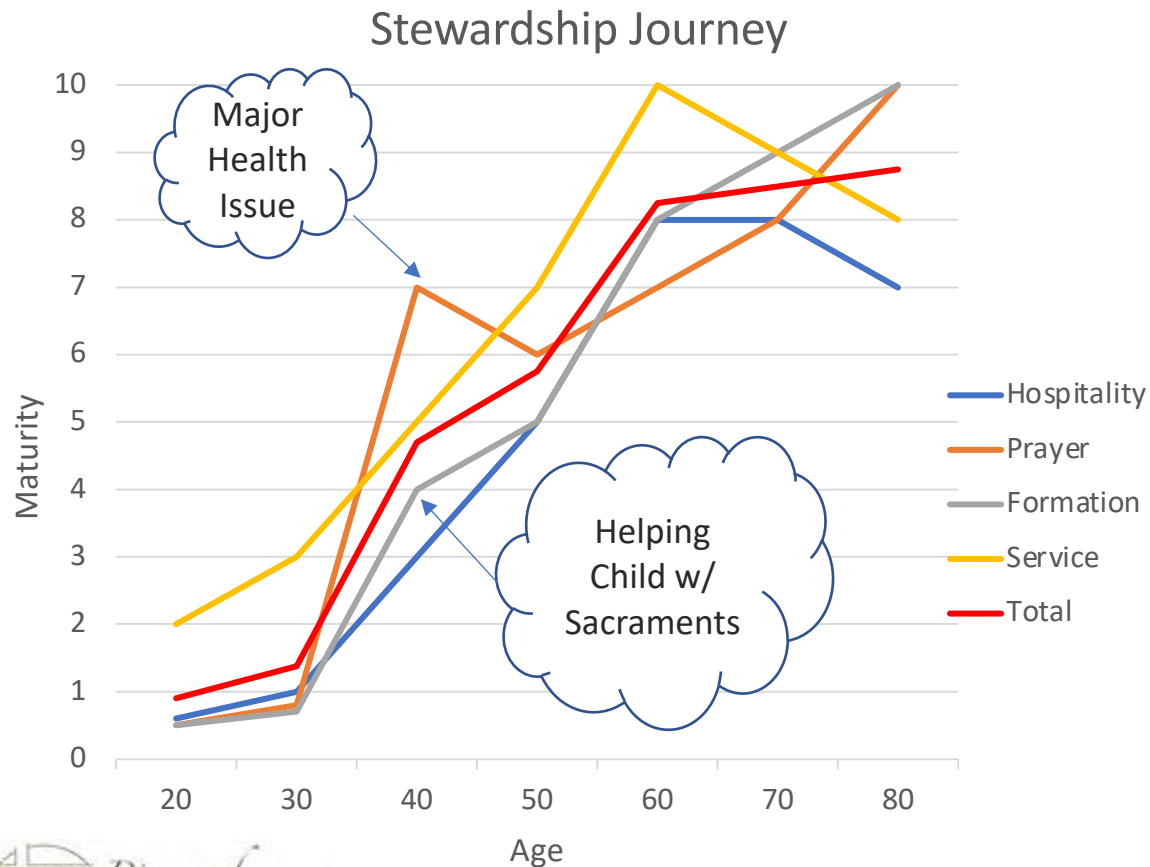
7. Accountability – Fundamental to good stewardship

- People are more willing to commit, if they trust the intent and see the execution
- Not just about treasure – is time and talent used effectively?
- Annual reports need to make connection between treasure and ministries
 - Needs to include status of church property and facilities

❖ Seven step process is not all-inclusive list of required activities



Stewardship Maturity – Individualized Paths



Things to Ponder

- Early stage: Focus on a cause (Environment) – Not tied to discipleship
- Life events can build or strain
- Formation can be jump started with strong family and catechesis
- Early years may take talents for granted
- This is a personal journey – sometimes people need to bend slowly

SECTION FOUR: PRACTICAL ACTION FOR PARISH

“Pray as though everything
depended on God. Work as
though everything depended on
you”

St. Augustine



Leadership/Motivations

“Commitment is the foundation of great accomplishments” *Heidi Reeder*

- **Leadership:**

- Is pastor ready? His buy-in is a must
- Leading by example is powerful – Witness and action
- Form a Stewardship Committee
 - Pastoral and lay leaders
 - Representative of all demographics
 - Willing to pray, learn and lead
- Since stewardship is all encompassing consider restructuring other committees
- Be deliberate and patient
- Build trust through accountability

- **Motivation:**

- Not something to do when Sunday collections are down
- Capital campaigns should be last part
- Be authentic - tie stewardship to discipleship
- Improve family life through stewardship
- Build a faith community full of vitality and resilience
- Evangelize and help greater community
- Help people stay on track toward Salvation!

Take Inventory of Current Activities/Ministries

“You don’t have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great” *Zig Ziglar*

- You are already doing activities that support the principles of stewardship
- Take stock to see what pieces of the puzzle are missing
- Use the “seven step” categories to help review current programs and activities
- Recognize volunteers who are making a difference
- Look at every bulletin article through the lens of stewardship and tie to one of the pillars



Considerations

“For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” *Matthew 18:20*

- ACC next steps
 - Attachment to original churches is emotional
 - Accountability demands the next steps
 - Remember what is at the heart of stewardship
- Parish demographics
- Cultural traditions
- Do these issues bring unity or cause strain?
- Remember the mission - Salvation



QUESTIONS?

"We must ask ourselves: Do we also wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ and Christian stewards of our world and our church?"

