



CONGREGATIONAL
STEWARDSHIP
WORKBOOK

Stewardship for Youth



Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000

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Stewardship for Youth

Introduction

Many congregations spend a lot of time and energy working with adults on “What it means to be a good steward.” How much time is spent working with children and youth to help them understand stewardship? In most congregations, very little time at all.

As background for this chapter, the youth of one congregation were asked if they could define stewardship. All of them said they had heard the word but none of them could say what it meant. When the meaning was explained to them, most of them just figured it was something for adults to do. How sad! Here is a group who is part of the church today but doesn’t understand how they can be a vital part in the stewardship of the church.

The church has many young people who have much to offer. Let’s help them understand what their role is as a steward. This will take the effort of adults working with youth to realize their God-given potential in the church. What is prepared for this chapter is just a beginning of what adults can do to help their youth.



Youth Stewardship Outline

1. *What Are We Building?* This is a hands-on activity for youth to do in either a Bible class or a youth meeting.
2. *Devotion Reflections.* These are designed for youth to read at home. Included in the readings are questions for reflection and a prayer. Space for journal writing might be appropriate. If the youth leader is concerned that the youth might not do these devotions at home, class time can be taken within classroom discussion. Either way, encourage those who are

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working with the youth to see if they have done the devotions and what they are getting out of them.

- Self-Destructive Sam
- Faithful Hannah
- Shadrach
- “A Lesson in Giving”
- Some Quotes to Think About

3. *Accountability*. This is the last part of the chapter and deals with what have they learned about stewardship and how can they apply it in their church. There’s an object lesson, a discussion on the reality of time and ideas for projects.

What Are We Building?

Purpose: To have youth reflect on how they live their lives. What are their priorities?

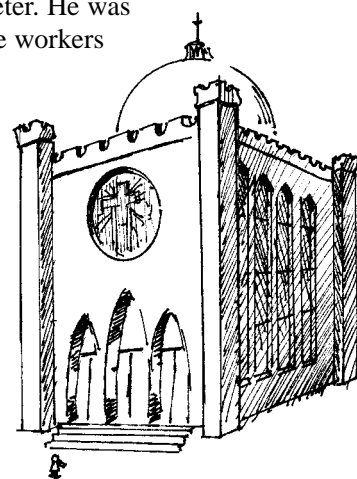
Supplies: paper, cups, paper plates, pipe cleaners, cottonballs, toothpicks, straws, markers, modeling clay, etc. A variety of things that youth can use to build with.

Activity: Build a monument to what your life is like. If possible do it on a time line. Start with past, go to present and then to the future. When others look at your monument, they should see what is important to you.

Give the youth about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the task. Have the youth go around and share what they have built and why it is important to them. If you have a large group you may want to break it into smaller groups to share what they have built.

Tell the story of Building cathedrals (I don’t know who wrote this story. I heard it about 10 years ago at a conference and I have used it many times since then.)

A long time ago when one of the great cathedrals in Europe was being built, there was a curious little boy named Peter. He was visiting the site and wanted to know what the workers were doing. He went up to the first one and asked, “Sir, can you please tell me what you are doing?” The guy looked at him and said, “Kid, what does it look like? I’m cutting rocks.” The boy wasn’t very satisfied with that answer and moved on to the next guy, and said, “Sir, will you please tell me what you are doing?” The man replied, “I’m making money to support my family.” The young boy decided to ask one more worker what he was doing. He saw a worker who had a smile on his face, so he approached him and asked, “Sir, will you please tell me what you are doing?” The man stopped and his smile became brighter and he said, “Son, I’m building a great cathedral!”



Ask the youth to identify with one of the three builders. Are they just living a day-to-day existence or do they have a goal in mind?

Devotion Reflections

Ask the youth what they are doing right now in their lives will last into eternity. Have them remove from their monuments everything that will not last into eternity. What are they left with? Some youth may be left with very little or nothing, depending on what they chose to represent their lives. This is not an exercise designed to make youth feel bad. However, it is designed to create a teachable moment. A moment when you as the teacher can come in and help teens begin to understand exactly what stewardship is. If your youth are like the youth in my congregation, they don't really know what stewardship is. If you ask them to define it for you, they don't have a clue. They have heard the word in sermons and such but they don't really understand how it applies to their lives.

Have them leave their structures where they are. They will be building onto them during the next class session.

Ask them to commit with you to do the following devotions during the next week. There are five devotions for the youth to meditate on, and some questions to answer.

Self-destructive Sam

How did my life end up this way? I used to be so popular. Girls were always interested in me. They liked my hair and my incredible strength. Now here I am sitting in this prison just waiting to die. I can't even see anything because I am now blind. I can hear the groans of the other prisoners and I can hear the rats. I have nothing but time on my hands, time to sit here and think about what I have done with my life.

God appointed me to be one of the Judges of Israel. He also gave me tremendous strength so that I could defend my people against the Philistines. There were some rules I needed to follow: I could drink no wine and no razor could touch my hair. My life was everything a guy could hope for: beautiful women, beating up the bad guys, and serving God in my own selfish ways.

One day I met up with babe named Delilah. She was something! When I was around her, she made me forget she was one of the enemy. I knew nothing would ever come of our relationship, but I just couldn't seem to let her go. She made me feel good about myself in a superficial way. Delilah was always trying to get me to tell her the secret of my strength. I would give her some made-up story about why I was strong. You would think after the first couple of times I told her a story and she tried to make me weak, that I could've guessed what she was up to. Especially when the Philistines kept showing up when I was supposedly weak. Of course, I always took care of those guys when they showed up in my house. I just wasn't bright enough to ask Delilah why they happened to be outside the door. Delilah become so upset with me, she would cry and beg me to tell her the secret of my strength. Little did I expect that she would use this information against me. She did though; the Philistines had offered her money. She cut my hair while I was asleep. The Philistines were outside

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the door waiting to hear their cue. When they heard Delilah yell, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you,” they rushed in and grabbed me. Of course, I thought I would still have my strength, but I didn’t. Even worse I thought that the presence of God left me. The Philistines mocked me and gave Delilah her money. I feel used, betrayed, but worst of all I know that I let God down.

After I was taken away, they gouged out my eyes, which is why I cannot see.

Here I sit in my jail cell thinking about how I have messed up my life. Basically, God gave me a gift to use for Him and His purposes, and I used it for my own selfishness. I am praying that God will give me a second chance to show Him that I can use my gifts for His glory.

The Philistines are planning a big celebration; I’ve heard rumors that I will be brought out as entertainment. Hopefully, I will be able to be used by God in some way.

Wait, I hear the guards coming for me now. They are taking me to the coliseum. I will ask them to place me by the huge columns. If they do, I will ask God to give me strength once again to defeat His enemies. I can feel my strength coming back. I know that if I kill all these Philistines, I will kill myself as well.

Samson did die that day with the Philistines. It was a sad death though. Even at the end Samson still put himself and what he had suffered first. God did answer his prayer, but it could’ve been so much more.

What gifts has God given you? How are you using your talents to glorify yourself? How are you using them to glorify God? I encourage you to make your talent count for something not just in this lifetime but into eternity.

Let’s pray. Gracious God, You have given each one of us gifts and talents. We confess that sometimes we use these talents to glorify ourselves, not even thinking about how we could use them for Your glory. Lord God, show us opportunities in which we can serve You with the talents you have given us. Help us schedule our time so we can fit in a variety of activities. We know that we have been chosen by You. By Your grace, we ask that You would help us to do Your will. Thank You for giving us Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Faithful Hannah

Can you imagine praying for something for years only to give it back once you have received it? What do you want the most out of life right now? Would you ever give it up once you had received it?

My name is Hannah and my husband’s name is Elkanah. For years we could not have children and my heart was so sad. My husband also had another wife. Her name was Peniannah and she had borne him many fine sons.

I prayed and prayed for a son and finally ended up offering God a promise. I said to Him, “O, Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon Your servant’s misery and remember me and not forget Your servant but give me a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life and no razor will ever be used on his head.”

The Lord heard my prayer and in time I conceived a son. When he was born, I named him Samuel, which in Hebrew means “heard of God.” I raised Samuel until he was 3 and then I took him to the Priest Eli and said to him, “I prayed for this child, and the Lord granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given to the Lord.” Samuel became one of the prophets of Israel and the Lord blessed me with five more children.

You see, everything we have is God's; it's out of His goodness and mercy that we receive all things. When you come to an understanding that all we have is God's, it gives you a different perspective on how it should be used, doesn't it?

Please pray with me. Lord, there are so many things we want to have in life. Help us to understand that everything we have and all we are given already belong to You. When You give us something, You are asking us to watch over it for You and to take care of it in a way that is pleasing to You. Help us to do that with all Your blessings. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.

Shadrach

My name probably sounds familiar to you, I'm sure you have heard of my buddies; Meshech and Abednego, you know, friends of Daniel. My real name is Hananiah, which means "The Lord shows Grace." I want to talk with you about time. Sometimes we are so impatient for things, we want it NOW. Let me tell you something, my friends, God's idea of time is so different from ours. My friends and I have been war captives in Babylon for 20 years. Sometimes it is so hard to be here. But then I remind myself that God does have a plan for our lives and we continue by God's grace to be faithful to Him.

Babylon at this particular time is not a good place to be, especially if you worship the one True God. It's not that Babylonians don't understand worship; they do, believe me. They have a little temple or shrine on every street corner for worshipping thousands of different gods. They have a god for everything imaginable. They are not happy people but they continue to race from god to god in hopes that with time they will manage to find the right one. These people have even given us different names. Shadrach means "Command of Aku." Aku is a Summerian moon god. I wonder if they think just because they have given me a new name that it will change who I worship.

There are people here who do not like my friends and me. We have made enemies because we have not worshiped false gods. They are right now plotting a way to get even with us by getting rid of us. I heard the Chief Seer talking with his friends about what he was going to do. You're probably wondering what a Chief Seer is. He interprets the king's dreams, reads the stars and watches for things to come. He claims that we ruined things for him when we came to town. He doesn't understand how we can worship someone we cannot see. Also, why God didn't save us when Babylon captured us, and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. He's a little nervous because our friend Daniel interpreted the king's dreams when he could not. His plan is to get King Nebuchadnezzar to erect a statue of

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himself and to require all of us to bow down and worship the statue regularly. Anyone not worshipping the statue would be cast into a fiery furnace. As soon as I heard the plan, I knew it would work. Nebuchadnezzar is arrogant and extremely pompous. He would love the idea of people worshipping him.

The statue was made and I suppose in most people's eyes it was a wonder to behold. All the gold and jewels, and the height alone was overwhelming. The day came when my friends and I were put to the test. The music was to play and everyone would bow down and worship at once. My friends and I stood firm, we would not bow down to that idol. We knew that it would mean the fiery furnace for us, and that it would be a painful death. Some of you are probably thinking that we knew God would rescue us from that death, but we did not. All we knew is that God would be with us. For all we knew, it could've been our time to die. We bravely stood our ground and boldly told the king that no matter what, God would watch over us. He thought we were foolish and we really ticked him off. He ordered that the flames be made seven times hotter. God sent an angel to take care of us. God did a great miracle that day. And the king saw that there was one more powerful than he and decreed that no one say anything against our God.

Time is precious, my friends; use it wisely. For us 20 years was a long time, but look how God fulfilled His purpose for us. Even when we cannot see what God's plans are, we can rest assured that He has a plan and He is preparing us for a purpose. Time is a precious gift God has given us. Let us pray.

Dear Lord, when we are placed in difficult situations, help us to remember Your presence in our lives. We thank You for all that You have done for us. Help us by the grace given to us through our baptism, Your Holy Word, and Holy Communion, to carry out the plans You have for our lives. Help us to be good stewards of our time. In Your precious name we pray, Jesus. Amen.

"A Lesson in Giving"

"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (Prov. 11:25).

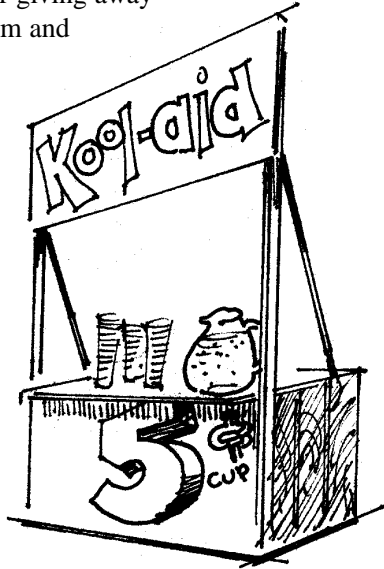
How many of you remember having a Kool-Aid stand as a kid? I remember the first time my mom let us kids have a Kool-Aid stand. We were so excited because Mom told us we could do whatever we wanted with the money. We weren't thrilled, however, to find out that our little brother had to help too. He was maybe 6 and always wanted to do what his three older sisters were doing. Mom made it clear that if we didn't let David help, we couldn't have our Kool-Aid stand. So we grudgingly agreed to his help.

It was a warm day for northern Minnesota so we did fairly well at first. Then the time started to drag and we were getting hot and tired, as our customers dwindled down to almost none. After 30 minutes of no customers we decided to close up shop and drink the Kool-Aid ourselves. But wait, in the distance we saw a boy on a bicycle pedaling in our direction—another customer. He came over to our stand and asked us what we were doing.

I thought it was kind of obvious with the sign that read “Kool-Aid Stand, 10 cents a glass.” We told the kid and he said he didn’t have any money. My brother then gave the kid a quarter to buy some Kool-Aid (part of our profits!). Then my brother proceeded to give him 15 cents change from the quarter he had given him! I couldn’t believe it. This just confirmed the fact that little brothers are not only pesky but silly as well! Of course the kid on the bicycle realized that he’d gotten a great deal and rode off.

At first we were mad at our brother for giving away our profits. Then we started to laugh at him and tease him for his lack of common sense.

This made him mad and then he got upset and started to cry. Pretty soon, Mom was out there wanting to know what the problem was with all of us? We told her and she said, “You girls should be proud that you have such a generous brother.” Of course, at the time, I couldn’t see it. All I saw was that our tiny profit had been made even tinier. Mom finally got a little bit mad at us girls and asked us how much money we put into making the Kool-Aid. Of course we had to say nothing. After that, we didn’t say anything.



I'll never forget that day or the lesson in generosity that I learned from my little brother.

Life isn't about how much money you can make. It's about taking a look at what you have, realizing that it's not really yours, and figuring out how you can use it to help others.

Count the cost? I'm sure all of you remember the story of the widow's offering. It's found in Luke 21:1-4. "As He looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'I tell you the truth,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'"

What do you think Jesus is saying in this story? How does it apply to you? Do you give out of your wealth or out of sacrifice?

Let's pray. Lord, You have blessed us with so much in our lives. Forgive us when we are not thankful and when we are selfish with what we have. Help us to understand the story of the widow's offering and how You would have us apply it to our lives. Help us to be generous to others with the many gifts You have given to us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Some Quotes to Think About

As you look at the following quotes, choose two that help you better understand what stewardship is. How did they help? Who could you share one of these quotes with?

“God has given us two hands—one to receive with and the other to give with. We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for

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sharing.” *Billy Graham*

“Have you ever stopped to think that Christ never gave anyone money? The riches of the world were His for the taking and His to give away, yet when the poor and the hungry came to Him, He didn’t give them money, and He rarely gave them food; He gave them love and service and the greatest gift of all—Himself.

“There is no portion of our time that is our time, and the rest God’s; there is no portion of money that is our money, and the rest God’s money. It is all His; He made it all, gives it all, and He has simply trusted it to us for His service. A servant has two purses, the master’s and his own, but we have only one.” *Adolphe Monod (1800-1856)*

“Use everything as if it belongs to God. It does. You are His steward.”

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” *Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965)*

Let us pray. Lord God, You are the giver of all things in our lives. Help us to use everything in a worthy manner that glorifies You. Thank You for giving us Jesus as our Savior, Friend and Teacher. Help us to be like Him. Amen.

Accountability

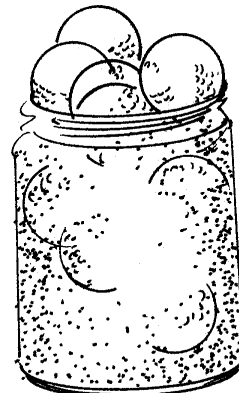
Stewardship is something that needs to be lived out in our daily lives. When you are working with youth they need a hands-on approach as to how being a good steward will impact their lives. In this session have handy the models of their lives that they made during the first session.

After helping them come to an understanding of what stewardship is in their lives, challenge them to live it! After you finish this session, have them create their models to fit the kind of life they want to live, one that involves stewardship. Let this last session be one for them to share their ideas of what they have come to understand stewardship to mean in their lives.

Time! There never seems to be enough time for everything in our lives. Teenagers are some of the busiest people I know! Here’s an object lesson to use with them. Take a glass quart jar and fill it half full of sand. Add golf balls to it. Have enough golf balls so they do not all fit. The golf balls represent the things we can do to give time to the Lord. After we do everything else first. It never seems to all get done.

Then take everything out of the jar and add the things we can do for God first, then add the sand. (If you get the combination right, all of it should fit in the glass jar.) When we do things in a proper order, they tend to work out better. “There is a time for everything” (Eccl. 3:1). With your students, look up this passage of Scripture and look at chapter three. God indeed does give us time for everything.

Then challenge the youth as to what kind of stewards they are going to be. What can they do with treasure:



- Encourage them to have a goal to save to buy something for the church, school, preschool, Lutheran nursing home, Lutheran camp, etc. Make their fund-raising efforts visible—make a poster with increments for when they reach a certain point.
- Have them sponsor a child through LCMS World Relief. Have the child's picture in a visible place.
- Have them sponsor a seminary student. Have them write letters. Plan a visit.

The list of ideas that the youth could generate for this one is endless. Let them do some fund-raising, but also have them put in some of their own money that they have worked for. As a leader help them process what giving means for them in their lives. How does what they give reflect who they are in Christ?

What can they do with talent? Challenge every student to use one of his or her talents to further the ministry of your church. This will take time and adults working to have youth feel valued as a part of their congregation. Give the youth a list of things they can do to help, i.e., greeters, readers, ushers, acolytes, nursery attendants, Sunday school and, vacation Bible school helpers, choir, instruments, drawings to decorate classrooms, baking for church dinners, computer support, etc. There are so many way to get youth involved using their talents. Here's another idea: take pictures of youth using their talents and make posters. Perhaps you could title them "Stewards of the Church."

What can they do with time? Encourage your young people to use their time wisely. Give them helpful tips to spend quality time with God: teen devotions, one-minute prayers throughout the day, Christian music, an accountable prayer partner. Have them keep a journal for one month, writing down their time spent with God.

With your youth set a timetable of when they will look at the progress of stewardship goals they made as a group. I would suggest that they evaluate their projects every quarter, and celebrate what God has done through them. Help them to see that they do make a difference in the life of the congregation.

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