



Ten Scriptures for your Stewardship Theme

Selected by Rev. Greg Allen-Pickett

As the programmatic year for the church begins to ramp up, Sunday School classes resume after a summer hiatus, and attendance picks back up after the summer dip, many churches are considering what to do for their stewardship campaigns this fall.

Consider using these scriptures that point to our Christian call to gratitude, generosity and stewardship not just as the invitation to offering, but use them as a call to worship, or during the prayers of the people, or as an additional scripture reading that ties into your sermon.

Keep in mind that stewardship isn't just for the fall. I would encourage you and your congregation to reflect on stewardship throughout the year. Below are some scriptures and brief reflections that you can use to do that. These can be incorporated into liturgies and prayers year-round.

Here are 10 scriptures that invite us to reflect on stewardship, generosity and gratitude:

1. Genesis 1:1-5 (The Creation Story)

Start at the very beginning! This verse reminds us that God created everything, so all that we have is ultimately from God. It is also a reminder that God brings light into our world, and as children of the light, we are called to live lives of gratitude and generosity, giving back to the work of God out of the abundance that God has shared with us from the very beginning.

2. Genesis 9:1-3, 16-17 (Noah, the aftermath of the flood and the rainbow)

This story is another reminder of God's generous provision to humanity. God provides for our basic needs and also establishes an everlasting covenant with us. Our response must be one of gratitude and generosity for this abundant provision. We can be inspired by the image of the rainbow and the reminder that God will provide for us, so we are called to respond generously to provide for the needs of others through stewardship.

3. Genesis 45:1-5 (Joseph offers forgiveness to his brothers)

The Joseph novella in Genesis, chapters 37-50, provides a beautiful case study in modeling generosity. Joseph is mistreated by his brothers and sold into slavery. He rises to become Pharaoh's vizier. His brothers come to Egypt in the midst of a famine and Joseph shares generously with his brothers, giving them not just food but forgiveness. This story reminds us that we have received so much from God: food for our bodies and forgiveness to heal our spirits and our lives. Therefore we are called to respond generously, just as Joseph responds generously to his brothers in their time of need.

4. Exodus 16:11-16, 31 (God provides manna to the Israelites in the wilderness)

The provision of manna to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness is a reminder that God provides abundantly for all of us. The details in this story of "meat at night and bread in the morning" and the delicious description of the manna offer a unique perspective that God doesn't just give us the bare minimum, but provides abundantly. In turn, we are called to share abundantly in our response to God, not just offering the bare minimum, but offering our best.

5. Psalm 24:1-5 (The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it)

Similar to Genesis 1, this Psalm reminds us that everything we have is from God. But then it takes us a step further and tells us that to see God face to face, we cannot lift up our souls to what is false. Money and consumerism can easily become a false idol, particularly in our US context. We are called to recognize that all we have comes from God. Acknowledging God's abundance and provision, and then sharing generously from that provision will help us move in the direction the Psalmist tells us to, to have clean hands and pure hearts. And we are promised blessing, vindication and salvation when we do that.

6. Proverbs 3:5-9 (Trust in the Lord with all your heart, honor God with your first fruits)

Proverbs offers a lot of pithy one-liners that can be used to reflect on our call to stewardship and generosity. They could even be used as a basis for a stewardship campaign, like Proverbs 3:9. It is helpful to see it in the larger context as well, not only is this a call to give generously from our first fruits, it is a reminder to trust in God, follow God, and seek God's wisdom. All of these are forms of stewardship and all are deserving of our attention and reflection, even as we seek to inspire generous financial giving.

7. Matthew 6:26-33 (Jesus talk about the birds and the lilies and God's provision)

Oftentimes a lack of generosity is based on fear or worry, that there will not be "enough." This verse reminds us that God provides generously to us, that we don't need to worry and instead we are called to "strive first for the kingdom of God." God provides, as Jesus promises in this verse, and then we are invited to share generously out of that provision.

8. Luke 10:25-29 (Love God and love neighbor, the greatest commandment)

Jesus answers the question, "And who is my neighbor" with the story of the Good Samaritan. Some version of the "Greatest Commandment" or the "Double Love Command" is found in all the synoptic gospels and this version in Luke concludes with the story of the Good Samaritan and is particularly fitting for reflecting on stewardship. This is the basis for Christian life, to love God and love our neighbors. And we show our love to our neighbors by giving generously of our time, energy and resources, just as the Samaritan did. If your church is engaged in mission or ministry that reflects the story of the Good Samaritan, then this scripture can be used as part of a stewardship campaign to inspire generosity in your congregation.

9. Luke 13:18-21 (Parable of the mustard seed and the yeast)

Big and small gifts are appreciated and can be used by God. There is hardly a more beautiful way to speak about the hidden promise of even the smallest gift than the image of the mustard seed, so tiny yet holding so much possibility. Or for those who are bakers, the yeast provides a similar illustration. We are given so many gifts from God, and we are called to give back. Perhaps we feel small, or we feel like our gifts are small, but we hold the promise of God's awesome power at work within us and through our gifts. So we share our gifts so that God can use them and grow them just like the mustard seed becomes a tree big enough for birds and the yeast grows big enough to make the bread and provide sustenance for us.

10. 1 Peter 4:8-11 (Love, hospitality and being good stewards of God's grace)

This verse reflects back on the double love command, calling for love. And one way that love is expressed is by giving generously to provide hospitality and serve our "neighbors." This verse also reminds us that we are recipients of the incredible gift of God's grace, and we are called to steward that gift by serving others. Ultimately, our giving is one way that we can glorify God and point to God's amazing love and grace for all of us, and that should be cause for generosity and celebration!

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