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WHAT'S IN YOUR TEACHING GUIDE

This Teaching Guide has three purposes:

- to give the teacher tools for focusing on the content of the session in the Study Guide.
- to give the teacher additional Bible background information.
- to give the teacher variety and choice in preparation.

The Teaching Guide includes two major components: Teacher Helps and Teacher Options.

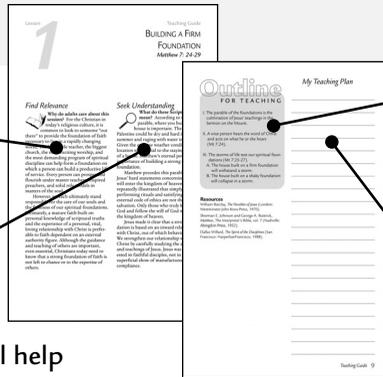
Teacher Helps

Find Relevance

helps you zero in on why each session is important for the adults you teach.

Seek Understanding

presents helpful Bible Background informations and insights that will help you better understand the Scripture.



Teaching Outline

provides you with an outline of the main themes in the Study Guide.

My Teaching Plan is a convenient place for you to make notes for teaching the session.

Teacher Options

Offer Illustrations presents material that will help you paint a picture of the session. This section often presents items from church history, current events, or interesting anecdotes that help introduce the session.

Discussion provides teaching activities that will help learners discuss the Scripture text.

Questions presents multiple collections of questions for various kinds of adults.

Involve Learners helps learners become actively involved with the Scripture text for a particular session.

Closure gives you a means for wrapping up the session.

You Can Choose!

There is more material in each session than you can use, so choose the options from each section to tailor the session to the needs of your group.

Prepare Before the Session

Read the session for today in the Study Guide. Then read the options in this Teaching Guide, placing checkmarks beside the activities you plan to include. After you have decided which options to use, gather the appropriate materials.

THE FUEL-EFFICIENT CHURCH

1 Corinthians 12:7-26

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? Unfortunately, sessions about stewardship do not naturally create excitement among adults. People come into such sessions expecting a lecture about tithing, materialism, and the appropriate use of money. Who hasn't walked away feeling guilty after an hour of hearing about stewardship? Perhaps it will be refreshing to share a facet of stewardship that many Christians do not realize exists. This session focuses on spiritual gifts, which are as much a part of stewardship as money and tithing. There are spiritual issues at stake in how we as individuals and we as a body of believers respond to God's provision in our lives. In that sense, what we do with God's gifts affects the advancement of the kingdom. Certainly, God's work does not hinge on our faithfulness, but our faithlessness can impede God's intention for us.

Seek Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? Paul's letter to the Corinthians was a response to questions asked by the Corinthian church leaders. In this section of the letter, the questions concern spiritual gifts. Due to the ethnic and religious diversity in Corinth, people from all types

of backgrounds and mentalities comprised the early church. Vast and varied economic opportunities easily made Corinth one of the most cosmopolitan and culturally diverse cities of the Roman Empire. The church at Corinth was no less diverse than its surrounding community. Paul's challenge was to teach these new believers from varied backgrounds what it meant to be a Christian and what was required of them as a church.

Writing about spiritual gifts, Paul cites the role of salvation and the Holy Spirit. Salvation comes through Jesus, followed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gifts each believer for a role in the kingdom of God. A believer's use of his or her unique gift is a definition of that person's stewardship. There is also completeness inherent in the exercising of individual gifts, for as each believer applies that gift, the church moves toward completeness. In other words, full and complete progress in a local church takes all believers exercising their unique gifts. This means that the stewardship of spiritual gifts is possibly the most important aspect of stewardship affecting the church.

Offer Illustrations

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ The Strange Equality of Gifts

In God's unique mathematics, the answer does not always follow the rules of logic. Jesus made statements about the last being first and vice versa. At another time, he said the rich were actually poor. Undoubtedly, many of the things Jesus taught confused people. The idea of spiritual gifts can also be confusing. Paul's understanding of how gifts were to be perceived was different from what most people expected. Paul stressed that all spiritual gifts are equal in every way; over time, the value of each is revealed. However, tell someone that their gift of hospitality is equal to Billy Graham's gift for preaching and they will most likely chuckle. In fact, the two gifts are equal in God's mathematics. One may be higher profile but only in exposure. Both are equal. In fact, they are actually tied together "supernaturally" by the Holy Spirit. This "supernatural" combining is how the church advances the kingdom. Tomorrow, begin the day with a pledge to exercise your gift; Dr. Graham certainly will!

○ Being Content with Your Gift

Calvin Miller tells the story of Helen of Hierapolis, a would-be faith healer of the first century. It seems that Helen was determined to have the gift of healing. She sought out lepers, the blind, and those missing limbs and attempted to heal them. She would cry out, "Grow back!" as she touched the stump of a legless man, and then she would stand back, waiting for it to grow back to normal. However, the leg did not grow back. Nor did any blind people receive sight or lepers get well. So Helen spoke to these people about Christ. Later, she attempted to heal a crippled boy but was again unsuccessful. So she bought him a new pair of crutches. Often people saw her guiding the blind after trying to restore their sight. Helen desperately wanted the gift of healing. She did not have that gift, but she did have the gift of mercy! (23-26).

Questions

- How might being content with the gifts you have change the ways you exercise them?
- How do you know which gift(s) God has given you?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ Exercising Your Gifts

Imagine together how your church would change if all or most of its members discovered their gifts and regularly exercised them. Begin your discussion by listing on the board various spiritual gifts. Ask your group to add their responses to the list. Then ask class members to consider as many practical outlets as possible for each gift listed. Record the possibilities for usefulness beside each gift.

As another possible line of discussion, write the word “stewardship” on the board or paper. Underneath it, create two columns, one labeled “money” and one labeled “gifts.” Then ask your class members to provide benefits for the church under both money and gifts.

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- What issues concerning spiritual gifts did the Corinthian church face?
- Describe Paul’s analogy for the church.
- How do we determine the genuineness of spiritual gifts?

Questions for All Adults

- How are spiritual gifts and stewardship related?
- In what ways are money and spiritual gifts related in stewardship?
- What would be on your list of spiritual gifts?

Questions for Mature Adults

- Do gifts change as one matures? Explain.
- How could you help a younger believer discover or discern his or her spiritual gifts?
- Is it more difficult to be a steward of spiritual gifts or of material blessings? Explain.

Questions for Younger Adults

- What do you think is your primary spiritual gift?
- Do you think younger generations expect more mature members to provide the bulk of the service needs in a church?
- Do you find it easier to be a steward of your material blessings or your spiritual gifts?

Questions for Adults with Children

- Do you consider yourself a role model for your children in regard to both spirituality and your gifts?
- What are the obstacles you face in exercising your gifts?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ **Gift-naming Ceremony**

Consider a “Gift-naming Ceremony” for your group. Pass around a box that contains the names of class members on slips of paper. Ask everyone to draw a name, making certain it is not his or her own. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-13 aloud as a reminder of the kinds of spiritual gifts. Remind the group that this list is not exhaustive, but a list of the Corinthian community’s gifts. Then ask each person to consider this question: “What is the spiritual gift of the person whose name is on my slip of paper?” Take time to go around the room and have each person name the spiritual gift(s) of the person on his or her slip. Encourage them to look at each other as they name their gifts. If someone has no idea what another’s gift is, encourage that person to ask, “Do you know your gifts, and if you do, will you share them with us?” At the end of the sharing time, ask, “Now that we have a better idea of our giftedness in this group, is there a natural ministry that we might undertake to use our gifts?” Encourage the group also to consider individual ways their giftedness might be used in the church. End with a prayer that God will lead you all toward ministry avenues where your gifts are expressed for the good of others.

○ **Discovering Gifts**

Consider planning a congregational ministry night for “giftedness.” At such an event, you might consider grouping together those with similar gifts and asking them to brainstorm ways they can use their gifts for the kingdom of God. You might also consider talking about ways to discover and to engage gifts in the ministry of the church. Depending on your group, encourage church members either to discuss if/how they can do a certain task or to plan specifically to complete a task.

If your group of learners does not think an event of this kind would work in your church, ask them to discuss why not. Encourage them to brainstorm other ideas for bringing together gifts in your church and encouraging their use. Think of ways your group can be a catalyst for your congregation’s discovering and using their gifts.

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ **Spending for God**

Have you ever considered that we are God’s currency? We are God’s to spend, to exert, and to exercise. However, we must be available for God to use. Ask your group to brainstorm ways that we can avail ourselves to be “spent” on the kingdom of God. Write their ideas on the board. In a closing time of prayer, assign each item on the list to someone in the group. Ask each person to pray that those listed opportunities will become a reality for your group or church.

THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20; Hebrews 13:1-6

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? It's not uncommon to hear people speak of the fast pace of life and the stress it creates. Disillusionment also seems to be common in modern American culture. Rick Warren uses incomplete, fill-in-the-blank sentences to illustrate the lack of peace in today's culture.

I'm ready to throw in the...
I'm at the end of my...
I'm just a bundle of...
My life is falling...
I'm at my wit's...
I feel like resigning from the
human... (53)

The treadmill of life affects believers and unbelievers alike. The "peace that surpasses understanding" isn't necessarily in place in all Christian lives. This session provides insight into finding both peace and contentment in life. It will also help place focus on God, the designer of life, and the true path to peace, contentment, stewardship, and biblical success.

Seek Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? The writer of Ecclesiastes dispenses wisdom, shifting from negative to positive, as he moves from a self-focused life to one dependent upon God. The Teacher had experienced life in its fullest, and his commentary reflects a lingering lack of satisfaction. In time, even the powerful and wealthy find that they cannot control life. The truly wise accept life as a gift of God that comes with purpose. In the end, the writer of Ecclesiastes promotes a simple life as opposed to one filled with acquisitions and luxuries. He tells us that the basics in life bring satisfaction and fulfillment.

In Hebrews, Paul scripts a framework for contented living. To the conclusions drawn in Ecclesiastes, Paul adds serving others, and he portrays a life based on love. By focusing on others—even strangers and the afflicted—with love, we honor God and God blesses us. By honoring vows, not allowing money or power to control us, and accepting life itself, we find peace.

Offer Illustrations

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ Heart Blockages

Cardiologists tell us that heart blockages can come in many forms. Coronary obstructions caused by blood clots or plaque are physiological in nature and can cause severe damage to the heart, even death.

When we allow someone or something to become more important than God, we have a spiritual heart blockage. Far too many Christians suffer from such a malady, forfeiting much of God's purpose for their lives. This type of heart blockage is always curable.

Questions

- Name things in our lives that can block our hearts from God.
- What damage can result from spiritual blockages?
- What exercises can improve our spiritual hearts?

○ Truly Dependent?

Ask your group to think about how much their lives might change if they truly believed life is completely dependent upon God. In reality, much of what happens in our lives is beyond our control. Read the following quotation to your class, and discuss the questions below.

One of the dangers of having a lot of money is that you may be quite satisfied with the kinds of happiness money can give and so fail to realize your need for God. If everything seems to come simply by signing checks, you may forget that you are at every moment totally dependent upon God (Warren, 70).

Questions

- Is it more comforting or fear-inducing to realize that we are totally dependent upon God for life? Explain.
- In what ways would your life change if you began to live this reality?
- Why does money often obscure recognition of our need for God?
- Besides money, what other things can cloud our realization that we are dependent upon God?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ Obedience to God

Ask your group to consider how divided we are in our loyalties. Do we live as followers of God who have dedicated ourselves, at some level, to God's will and kingdom, yet at the same time choose to follow the demands of our society often without question or critique?

Often we divide our loyalties because it is the path of least resistance. However, the result is living in tension between God and our world. We live by two value standards, which means that one ultimately wins over the other. Jesus said clearly that we cannot serve two masters.

Questions

- What would change if we adopted a lifestyle of full obedience to God? How might that choice affect our jobs, our relationships, and our families?
- If any one of us made that choice, how would the rest of the group support that individual?
- How would you describe your obedience to God?

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- What are the benefits of the simpler life as highlighted in Ecclesiastes?
- What must believers do to find peace and contentment in life?
- Why does Paul state that we must have love for the damaged and hurting in order to live a life of purpose?

Questions for All Adults

- How far are we from the simple life spoken of in Scripture?
- What must be done in order to find contentment in life?
- How is the simpler, contented life connected to stewardship?

Questions for Mature Adults

- In what ways have you seen society and culture change in relation to luxuries?
- Is it easier to find contentment in life at this point as opposed to earlier times?
- In what ways could you model the contented life and stewardship for younger believers?

Questions for Younger Adults

- In what ways do you see a life of contentment and purpose being connected to stewardship?
- Left to your own devices, do you think you could achieve a contented life?
- Name ways that the love or control of money limits peace and contentment.

Questions for Adults with Children

- Are you presently modeling a life of peace, contentment, and stewardship for your children?
- Would it be easier or more difficult to move toward the simpler life with children at home?
- Did having children make you more dependent upon God? If yes, how?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ **Planned Obsolescence**

Tell the group that “planned obsolescence” was introduced in the 1930s. Engineers began to design products that would not last over time. Cars, televisions, hairdryers, computers, and many other items we use every day are not constructed from the best materials or design because they are intended for a limited life. Therefore, as consumers, we participate in the cycle of planned obsolescence. We buy an item, use it, and become accustomed to using it; then when it breaks, we go buy another one. In other words, we are purchasing not just a product but a dependent relationship with that product and its manufacturer. Given this scenario, ask the group to consider the following questions.

Questions

- How might your use of available resources change if you could purchase items that would last a very long time?
- How does planned obsolescence contribute to our “throw-away culture”?
- How do you determine that something is of value?
- How do you help people understand the value of investing in the work of the church?

○ **Basic Necessities**

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil, and ask each person to list the basic necessities for a home and family. After a few moments, ask volunteers to read their lists to the large group. More than likely there will be many opinions as to what defines necessities. Use the opportunity to discuss intentional consumption, overlooked blessings, and stewardship.

Questions

- What were the most common things on everyone’s list?
- Was there anything from someone else’s list that you wished you had included in your own?
- What are some “luxuries” you would rather not do without?
- Do you struggle with being content? If so, why?

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ **Responsible Stewards**

To close your time together, ask participants to consider using the coming week as an opportunity to focus on their responsibilities as stewards of God’s blessings. Challenge them to be especially observant of the differences between basic necessities versus luxuries in life. Ask them to share prayers of thanksgiving to God for their blessings; offer them as a closing prayer.

3

WHAT'S IN IT
FOR ME?*2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Philippians 4:14-19**Find Relevance*

Why do adults care about this session? If you were to ask your class, “What’s the easiest aspect of faith living?” what are the chances you would hear tithing as a response? Likely, tithing would be near the bottom of the easy list for most Christians. Tithing is about giving up control of something important. It might be said that people who practice tithing have progressed to the point of seeing their money in selfless ways. Still, let’s face it—only a minority of Christians tithe. Why? Perhaps Christians do not realize the benefits of tithing. Scripture tells us that God blesses genuine stewards. Tithing also results in corporate blessings as giving helps progress the local church and the kingdom of God. Genuine stewardship provides a concrete commitment to God and is a step toward full selfless living. Of course, many people will be interested in the personal blessings. They want to know if the blessings are tangible. That answer resides in the “mysteries of God” category. Some trumpet the actuality of tangible, even monetary blessings that result from tithing. We can say truthfully that definite *spiritual* blessings follow tithing. Paul describes tithing as the “riches of God’s mercy.” Those blessings will be plentiful and are well worth giving up the control of money.

Seeking Understanding

What do these Scriptures mean? Our focal Scriptures detail two different church responses to giving. Paul’s words to the Corinthians are poignant and clear: Give the offering you promised. He was kind and instructive in his letter to the tardy stewards of Corinth. The reasons for their lapse in giving are largely unclear, but Paul was ready to forgive the lapse and proceed. He offered insights into the benefits and outcomes of giving for ministry purposes. However, he first laid important groundwork as to what defines genuine giving—attitude and spirit. Generosity is often mistaken as having to do with the amount given, when it is best defined by the spirit and attitude with which one gives. The Corinthian church had not been forthcoming in their pledge to give to ministry needs. They had potential, but they lacked spirit.

To the much poorer church in Philippi, Paul wrote words of thanksgiving and praise. They had a history of supporting Paul. Despite few resources, they were ready and eager to give to ministry causes. Since they were generous, willing, and of the right spirit, Paul said God would richly reward their obvious stewardship. Theirs could be the prime biblical example of generous giving. They were selfless in their stewardship. Their

Offer Illustrations

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ **Negativity on the Rise?**

Few would argue that the world seems to become more negative, even evil, with each passing day. A rise of selfishness and entitlement is also obvious in most facets of life. From the reality television shows that promote treachery and deceit, to the proliferation of lawsuits, people only seem interested in looking out for “number one.”

Questions

- What are possible reasons that our society has become even more self-centered over time?
- Why do you think people accept deceit and manipulation as appropriate methods of winning?
- What are some situations in which individuals have worked toward the common good?

○ **Enslaving or Liberating?**

M. Scott Peck writes, “It is often recognized that money is perhaps more likely to be enslaving than liberating” (68). Why is money so prone to capturing people? Is it because the love of money leads to all sorts of evil things? Is it because such a love for anything other than God is wrong? Is it because money and our human nature are naturally compatible? Money will always be a potential stumbling block for us. So why not try to be more like Paul, giving up the love of all else for the kingdom of God? Paul wrote, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Those words are a good mission statement for all of us.

Questions

- Why is money so powerfully seductive?
- How would a church or individual mission statement shaped from the above words of Paul change our lives?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ It Costs Too Much

Writer Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Money often costs too much” (Brainy Quotes). On the board, create two columns. At the top of one column write “Cost,” and at the top of the other write “Benefit.” Ask the group to consider the costs of money. Record their answers as they respond (for example, effort, relationships, training, education, and ethics). For the second column, ask the group to list the benefits gained from having money. Again, record the group’s responses, which might include power, status, homes, cars, or clothing. Then compare the costs and benefits of money by asking questions like the following.

Questions

- Is it possible to have too much money? What is the cost of having too much? What is the cost of having too little?
- How was Emerson right? How was he wrong?
- In your own life, is the cost of money too high? Explain.

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- Did the more impoverished state of the Philippians make them more likely to give willingly than the Corinthian believers? Why or why not?
- What material blessings can be inferred from Scripture?
- What spiritual blessings can be inferred from Scripture?

Questions for All Adults

- Can we expect blessings for practicing stewardship?
- What blessings related to genuine stewardship have you already received?
- How has your stewardship affected the kingdom of God?

Questions for Mature Adults

- It seems that the idea of a prosperity gospel is a new phenomenon. What do you think is the reason for this movement?
- Is there a difference between giving to the church and giving to God’s kingdom?
- Is dissatisfaction with the church an appropriate reason to withhold giving to God?

Questions for Younger Adults

- Do you have expectations or return blessings in mind when you practice stewardship?
- If God promises blessings in Scripture, why do so few Christians tithe?
- How might we teach the blessings of giving more effectively?

Questions for Adults with Children

- How are children part of God’s blessings in our lives?
- In what ways could you model Philippian stewardship for your children?
- Do you feel that it is more or less difficult to stave off the seductive power of money after children are born? Explain.

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ **What If?**

What if everyone contributed? That is an interesting question to address with your group. Ask the group (or check with your local chamber of commerce ahead of time) what they believe the local average wage is in your community. Once you have agreed on a figure, ask the group if they believe that figure is reflective of your church community. Depending on the demographics and typical occupations of your church members, it may be slightly different from your larger community. If too low or too high, adjust the estimate to everyone's satisfaction. If your group cannot agree on a figure, work with two numbers, one low and one high.

Now calculate ten percent of your figure(s). Decide on the number of active families in your congregation. If you want to be accurate, ask someone in the church office for this figure ahead of time. Once you have this figure, multiply the number of "active" families by the ten percent figure(s). For many congregations, if they have estimated the number of families and the income correctly, the result is higher than their current budget figures.

Questions

- How could we encourage everyone in our congregation to give something, hoping that over time their giving might grow?
- How would the ministry of our church be different if everyone contributed something?

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ **Making Commitments**

Close your time together by asking them to consider their own commitment to stewardship. Say something like, "I am going to lead us in prayer, during which I will pause for a few moments to allow you to write how you would complete these sentences: (1) I feel God is asking me to... and (2) I am willing to commit to doing...."

Inform your learners that they can take their responses with them and during the week spend time considering what they wrote. They can change their responses at any time, but they should record the change on their slip of paper. Ask them to carry the paper with them as a reminder of what they believe God is asking them to do and their response to God.

Lead the group in prayer, remembering to pause so they can write their responses. Be sure to close the prayer with thankfulness for a group willing to consider seriously their commitment to God and your church.

GIVING THAT SHOULD HURT

Luke 21:1-4

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? When Jesus came to complete the law, he implemented a heart-directed and relationship-based system from which faith in God would ensue. Static rules were abolished, and behavior was transformed by the ways of the Spirit. This new approach to faith affected stewardship in profound ways. While the church held on to the practice of ten percent as a benchmark for giving, we see New Testament statements pointing toward much more. The difference now is the personal relationship God has with each believer and the level of availability of each believer. Society and culture often applaud a big monetary gift, but God upholds the sacrifice of anyone with a rich faith. This session's Scripture passage depicts Jesus as he watches an old widow give nearly everything she has. Many others gave more in quantity that day but not as much in faith.

We must see the need to give sacrificially, that is, to give until it hurts. The stretch of giving more requires faith. Most people today recognize the reality but are fearful of attempting it. However, is faith real if it doesn't take us anywhere new?

Seek Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? Jesus carefully observed the actions in the outer area of the temple. The Hebrew mindset was that God favored the rich. The people gave so the blessings would continue to flow. We might question whether the giving would have ceased altogether with the onset of particularly bad times.

The focal point of this Scripture is an elderly widow who placed in the collection box what was likely the smallest gift of the day. Her gift of two small coins would not have kept the temple running. However, Jesus praised her gift as huge, not in the amount, but in the sacrifice. She gave all she had. How would she eat? How would she pay taxes? Her faith in God led her to give all she had as a contribution. With little regard for the future in societal terms, she took a bold step, giving until it genuinely hurt. Jesus commended her faith and calls us to follow her example.

Offer Illustration

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ A 180 on Giving

Leonard Sweet believes the Greek word normally translated “steward” is better translated as “trustee.” The belief that what we give actually belongs to us provides a slippery slope to selfishness. The knowledge that we are simply trustees of all we have been blessed with frees us to receive ninety percent from God (53).

Questions

- What do you think of Sweet’s view of being a trustee as opposed to a steward?
- How might being a trustee affect your spiritual life?
- In what ways would the kingdom of God be affected by this shift in thinking?

○ The Camel and the Needle

In the aftermath of his conversation with a rich young man who had inquired about salvation, Jesus said, “Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (Mt 19:24).

Questions

- Why do riches and material wealth make it difficult to have complete faith in God?
- Wealth does not negate faith in God. What do you think Jesus meant by his statement in Matthew 19:24?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ Seed Money

There is an old joke about a man who spoke to a church congregation one Sunday morning at the pastor's request. The man stood in the pulpit and told how he was once nearly destitute, his family was preparing to leave him, and creditors were ready to repossess what little he had. At that time, the man made a bargain with God, giving everything he had as a tithe, a "seed." The man told the congregation that from that seed, he now owns the business he once worked for, has a mansion for a home, and vacations wherever he chooses. All this is now his because of his willingness to give everything to God. The man walked from the pulpit to sit beside an elderly woman who was a long-time member of the congregation. She leaned over to him and said in a quiet voice, "I dare you to do it again."

Questions

- Do we give in order to get?
- How do you understand giving as a response to God's graciousness?
- What do you think motivates most givers?

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- How might you interpret these verses with today's economy in mind?
- What are other biblical examples of people who gave in profound ways?
- What might Jesus have been implying concerning our responsibility to those who are poor?

Questions for All Adults

- What is the difference between a trustee and a steward?
- What is your understanding of sacrificial giving?
- How might churches better teach stewardship?

Questions for Mature Adults

- Do you think it is easier for adults over age fifty to tithe?
- What are spiritual reasons why someone older may be more apt to tithe?

Questions for Younger Adults

- What is the scariest part about tithing at your age or life station?
- Think of things that would have to change in your life if tithing were to become regular. Over the long term, would these changes be positive or negative?

Questions for Adults with Children

- At what age do you think it is good to begin teaching children about money and stewardship?
- As parents, we are trustees of our children. Does this alter your views on stewardship in other facets of life? If so, how?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ **Steward and Trustee**

Most of us have jobs, serve on a committee, or even use items that belong to someone else. In each of these scenarios, we are stewards, trustees. Ask the group, “When you are at work, in committee meetings, or using someone else’s property, what responsibilities must you consider with the available resources for your job, committee, or personal use?” Give the group time to generate answers, and write their responses on the board.

Questions

- Why are these responsibilities important?
- What would happen if you failed to live up to your responsibilities?
- How is your role in these scenarios like that of a steward or trustee?
- What would happen if you considered yourself a steward or trustee of all things in your life? How might you look at the world and your neighbors differently? Would you be more or less inclined to share?

○ **Fifty Cents**

Give every person in your group fifty cents. If you have a large group, you may need financial assistance in supporting this activity. Tell the group that the money in their hands is God’s money given by others. Their job is to spend the funds wisely and gracefully to accomplish God’s calling. They can give the money to the church or use it for a ministry idea. Whatever they do with it, encourage them to use it for God.

Form small groups to brainstorm possibilities for how they can use their funds (or save them) to accomplish God’s mission. After five to eight minutes, ask for reports to the large group and discuss the ideas they generate. Ask, “Is it hard to

have so little to spend? Could you do more if you had been given more? What does this exercise tell you about our church budget?”

Finally, encourage the group to put this money to use this week. When you gather again, ask them how they used their money. Everyone will look forward to hearing how the funds were put to work.

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ **Week’s Calling**

Read aloud the following benediction. Ask the group to meditate on the words as their calling for the week.

Depart now into the fellowship of God with this calling: “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things. What you have learned and received and seen in Christ, do those things, and the God of peace will be with you.”