



Grace and Peace to you from God and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hey everyone the end of October brings our focus onto Stewardship topics. Over the next six weeks we will concentrate on various aspects of Stewardship for a follower of Christ. You guessed it our design is an original, our theme "Let's Talk..."

Each week you will receive some information that pertains to the topic of the week and you might be asked to "ponder" or "respond" as seems fit for you.

As we kick off this theme Let's Talk... I believe we need to begin - in the beginning - to learn about the history of Stewardship.

I am sharing information written by Dr. William O. Avery of the Gettysburg Seminary. Dr Avery writes...

"Stewardship" is a word created by leaders in the Protestant churches of North America in the late 19th century...The concept developed in response to the separation of church and state,... By necessity, the American church had to find a way to raise money for congregations and missions. Over the last one hundred years, there have been three periods or stages when stewardship has taken a high profile...

1. The Beginnings of American Stewardship 1890 - 1918

- This first period linked stewardship with law and connected it with the tithe.
- Churches ... needed to find their own way of gathering funds.
- Early methods ...included renting or selling pew space, subscription lists, church suppers, church socials, raffles and lotteries.
- Special collections were taken in support of missions ...
- ... envelope giving offered privacy.
- Churches began to adopt unified budgets.
- A rising middle class began dealing with the "burden of affluence".
- The enthusiasm for mission collapsed with the loss of idealism in the United States...many congregations took to erecting new church buildings rather than giving money to benevolences or missions.

2. The Flowering of Stewardship 1945 - 1965

- The second period connected stewardship with the Gospel and began to see money as only a part of a broader understanding of stewardship.
- During the post World War II period, ... The United States entered an era of unprecedented and increasing affluence.

- American life was changed by suburbia, the interstate highway system, better automobiles and television.
- The situation was ripe for the church to respond to the needs of the people.
- In contrast to the atheism of communist nations, Americans were "God-believing church goers".
- Church membership as a percentage of the total population grew from 49% in 1940 to 63% by 1960.
- A renewed interest in stewardship brought forth the three "T's" - Time, Talent and Treasure. This elicited a positive response in campaigns.
- Denominational loyalty was strong. In 1957, 96% of Americans cited a specific religious affiliation.

3. The Globalization of Stewardship 1980 - 2000?

- The current period joins stewardship with the care of this world and often does not mention money.
- A broader definition of stewardship includes a lifestyle of working for the environment, justice, peace and the integrity of creation.
- The word "stewardship" became more popular in secular circles than it was within the church.
- Christianity does not play as important a role in the establishment; secularization is taking over society.
- Focusing stewardship... should be on the needs of the whole world.

Reflections on the History of Stewardship

- We learn that we are not masters living in a world that we own and control, but we rather are stewards of what has been entrusted to us.
- Christian stewardship is rooted in God's gift of Jesus Christ to us, and we are entrusted with sharing this gift.
- Through God's grace, we freely receive God's gifts and have permission to use these gifts.
- Stewardship has to do with every aspect of living out personal faith, including creation, lifestyle, gifts, finances and callings/vocation.
- Churches are increasingly dependent on lay members to assume their rightful place of servant leadership, using their gifts to participate in God's work in the world today.

Now that you have some history. Please take some time throughout this next week to ponder what Stewardship means to you. Please write it down (with or without your name), and place into the offering plate next Sunday. **Let's talk...** about what we are familiar with about stewardship. And next week, **Let's talk...** about Becoming Stewards of God's Creation.

Sherry