

STEWARD: TRAINING GUIDE

Abiding Practices for Missional Communities

Steward : Disciples demonstrate generosity as they regularly and cheerfully give according to what God has given them.

WHY WE STEWARD

The idea of stewardship is right at the beginning of God's story. If we aren't careful, we will track stewardship to later biblical references tied to giving tithes and possessions. The biblical story certainly includes those things, but the Abiding Practice of Steward is much more foundational than an Old Testament command or an observation of ancient Israel. Let's look at the very beginning of the story in [Genesis 1:26-28](#)

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

What do we see happening here? First, our trinitarian God said "let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He created man and woman out of the overflow of joy he has in the perfect communion as Father, Son, and Spirit. Second, God blessed Adam and Eve. We aren't exactly sure of everything this blessing includes, but imagine anything it could encompass as his perfect image-bearing children in an unbroken relationship with him in the Garden of Eden. Then God commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (with his image bearers). Finally, God instructed Adam and Eve to subdue and exercise dominion over all the earth. He gave all of his good creation to Adam and Eve to steward, care for, manage, and lead. This is very important: Adam and Eve are not owners of God's creation. It belongs to him. They are stewards of his creation, and that stewardship has been passed down to us today. We are stewards. It's who we are.

Though, what happens in [Genesis 3](#)? The stewards attempt to become owners and inadvertently wreck God's good creation. Death enters the world, along with hopelessness, fear, shame, and greed. However, [Genesis 3](#) isn't all bad news. There's a promise in verse 15 of one who will crush the head of the enemy who led humanity away from stewarding all of God's creation. We see this promise expounded in Genesis 12 with the call of Abram. He is blessed by God, and in that blessing, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed ([Genesis 12:3b](#))." Abram becomes the steward of God's blessing unto the ends of the earth.

Abraham's blessing ultimately culminates in Jesus coming into the world as Immanuel himself. The entire earth will be blessed through him. He comes to restore God's family to himself, and in doing so Jesus reestablishes our identity as stewards. In the first part of [Ephesians 1](#), Paul notes that the Father "has blessed us in Christ in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ([Ephesians 1:3b](#))." He does this "as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth ([Ephesians 1:10](#))." What does this mean? It means from the beginning of time and continuing through our redemption in Christ, we have been blessed as stewards to bless the whole world. We are stewards. It's who we are.

When you think of stewardship, don't just think about your money and possessions. Think also about your time and the unique ways God has gifted you. To say it in a more memorable way: stewardship is about your time, your talents, and your treasure. We steward these things because God has so richly given us everything in Christ. Again, we own nothing. It all belongs to God. That can be really hard in our affluent, western culture to understand and live in that reality. God rescued us from failed ownership of that which will all pass away in order for us to steward his creation so that the world may experience the blessing of our great, loving, kind, and gracious God.

STEWARD IN COMMUNITY

We are wealthy—really wealthy. We live in a time and place where we have become inundated with more than we could possibly need in order to live very comfortable lives. This is why we desperately need community in walking out our identity as stewards. The world says “get all you can get and keep all that you can keep.” The world says that our identity is wrapped up in our success and our possessions. But the Kingdom of God is upside down compared to this world. The life of a steward is revolutionary and backward to what the world expects. This is not our home, we’re living for a different Kingdom. Everything we “own” actually belongs to God. He is allowing us to steward it for a season in order to display to the world the Kingdom of our good God. Let’s now think about what exercising this stewardship looks like in the three rhythms of a Missional Community.

Family Gatherings

When God plants a Missional Community (just like when he plants a church), he brings a diversity of time (availability, margin, and commitment) talents (passions and spiritual gifts) and treasures (finances and possessions) to the table. We steward these things as we get to serve each other. John 13 reminds us that the world will know that we are his disciples by how we love one another. Stewardship is a critical piece of a missional life. Perhaps you steward your time and treasure to prepare a meal for someone in your group who is walking through a difficult season. Maybe God has given you a talent of being financially savvy, so you use it to teach your group for a few weeks how to better steward their money for the purpose of advancing the kingdom. Another way to live out this practice during the Family Gathering is for all of us to be honest and vulnerable about where we are in our journeys as stewards and ask for help in the areas we might struggle to live out this identity. The Family Gathering is a safe place where we can vulnerably communicate our needs to one another and then pray together that we would see that our time, talent, and treasure actually belongs to God. When we approach it in this way, we understand that we’re just giving to God what already belongs to him in the first place.

DNA Groups

DNA Groups are the place where conversations with our brothers and sisters challenge our stubborn and selfish hearts to grow as stewards. The more we Discover, Nurture, and Act, the more we will be encouraged to pursue godly stewardship. Here we can learn to release the facade of ownership as we give our brothers and sisters the freedom to speak into our financial and calendar decisions. Together we can prayerfully plan what Godly stewardship will look like in each of our lives and then hold one another accountable to what we believe God has called us. This will definitely challenge our idols of comfort and security, but it will grow us in gratitude and humility as we give from what we’ve been given.

Neighborhoods to Nations

God blessed Abram so that his family could be a blessing to the whole world, and we have been grafted into that same blessing through Jesus. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ so that he may be seen and experienced to the ends of the earth.

Thinking locally, pool your time, talent, and treasure together to throw the best party your neighborhood has ever seen. Your home doesn’t need a butler’s pantry in order to host an extravagant dinner for your neighbors. Steward your time to serve the homeless and hungry in our city. Volunteer your talent with [The CornerStone Initiative](#) to serve as a mentor for their Faith & Finance program or their Jobs For Life initiative. There are many other opportunities where you can give to your neighbors as God has given to you.

Thinking globally, perhaps God hasn’t called you or your family to serve on the other side of the world. However, a faithful steward is still a vital part of the gospel reaching to the unreached. Steward your finances (treasure) to help send missionaries to reach those who haven’t yet heard of Jesus. Steward your time to fast and pray as an entire Missional Community for unreached people groups and for our own brothers and sisters serving among them. Steward your time and treasure to send care packages to those serving the church in hard places. Steward your money together to build a well with [NeverThirst](#) so that the unreached can have clean water and hear about the [Living Water](#). Be creative. There is so much that can be done for the glory of God when we see our money and time as gifts to be used for him.

SAMPLE COMMITMENT

Below is a sample commitment that you can use as an example for planning your time together.

STEWARD COMMITMENT

Missional Community Leaders: The Finleys and Battles

Date of Commitment: September 2023

Date to Reevaluate Commitment: December 2023

Commitment

Our Missional Community is committing to take time with our individual families to evaluate our current time commitments in order to be generous with our calendars. We'll also evaluate our talents in order to serve one another, the church, our neighbors, and the nations with our passions and giftings. Lastly, we'll evaluate our treasures in order to be generous with our finances and possessions.

Family Gatherings

We will devote our Family Gathering time to watch the Steward video and review the training guide and then discuss it, and make action plans in the following weeks.

DNA Groups

Our DNA Groups will spend some time talking about each of our budgets. In that discussion, each member will identify an area where we are tempted to be selfish. We will also identify an area where we have a passion to be generous. We will write these things down within each DNA group and commit to pray weekly about our progress in these areas.

Neighborhoods To Nations

We will also commit to saving money as a Missional Community to finance one well through NeverThirst. We have chosen the Musuani Primary School well in Kenya as our sponsor, with a goal of \$3000 over the next year.

Conclusion

We are so grateful that you have engaged in the Abiding Practice of Steward. This is a counter-cultural idea. It will likely be difficult to shift your lives toward seeing everything you "own" as actually belonging to God. He has entrusted you as a steward of your time, talent, and treasure while you are living in this world. However, success in this area is simply obedience to try. Every goal and dream we have as individuals and Missional Communities may not be accomplished. We are confident that your hearts will be changed and the Kingdom of Christ will advance as you attempt to steward everything God has given to you for his glory. Well done!

STEWARD RESOURCES

We would encourage you to engage with the following resources as you discuss how to implement the Abiding Practice of Steward.

Recommended Sermons

[Steward - Life in the Vine: Practices for Abiding in Jesus](#) - Paul Whaley

[You Need Biblical Giving](#) - David Platt

[Stewardship for Mission](#) - Jeff Vanderstelt (we can provide you with membership credentials!)

Recommended Books

[The Treasure Principle: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving](#) - Randy Alcorn

[Crazy Busy: A \(Mercifully\) Short Book about a \(Really\) Big Problem](#) - Kevin DeYoung

[Your Days are Numbered: A Closer Look at How We Spend Our Time](#) - John Perritt

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Neighborhoods To Nations: