



SYNOD STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

# The Language of Stewardship



**SOUTHWESTERN  
PENNSYLVANIA  
SYNOD** EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN AMERICA

Presented by the 2020 Stewardship Committee

# THE LANGUAGE OF STEWARDSHIP

## Video Project Companion Book

The following 10 words are synonyms of "stewardship".



When you hear the word 'stewardship' what do you think of?

How would you explain stewardship to someone else?

As you look at the list of synonyms for stewardship, which ones draw your attention?

Why?

Pick one of the videos or transcripts that correspond with the word you chose and watch/read it.

As you listen to the presenter,

What is this person's job or vocation?

How does that relate to the word they are expanding upon?

What questions would you want to ask this person?

How do you understand this word similarly or differently?

If you were to write or speak about this word, what would you say?

Repeat this process with additional videos or transcripts.

As you come to the conclusion of this series, do you understand stewardship any differently?

## STEWARDSHIP AS CONDUCT

My name is Kathy Ferlin. My word for this stewardship project is CONDUCT, and I chose to use the definition, "the manner in which one behaves". Being raised Lutheran and attending a parochial school for several years, a verse from Matthew 7 had been ingrained. "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

As a former elementary teacher, conduct, both mine and that of my students, was a critical part of my career. It was important to me that the students behaved and were ready to learn the content I had to teach. I always tried to model appropriate behavior to my students so they would recognize what good conduct looks like. The students were rewarded as they developed listening and responding skills. Eventually, modeling appropriate conduct regarding social skills and interpersonal relationships came into the classroom. Throughout my years as an elementary educator, I did see many children learn to treat others as they wanted to be treated themselves. It became a treasure to watch the primary aged children grow into kind adolescents, and eventually productive, kind adults in our community.

Conduct remained an important aspect as I worked with colleagues in learning new curriculum or assessment measures. While many types of change are not welcome with open arms, I tried to conduct myself with kindness and professionalism when met with resistance. Over time, that conduct became reciprocal and we were able to move forward in our efforts. With respect and kindness embedded in our work, we were able to bring new methods and information to the students with success. In my personal life, my conduct was equally important.

For many years I was a single parent to three wonderful children. Knowing that my children were my greatest gift, it was important to me to make every effort to raise them in a loving Christian home. That meant that my conduct in every situation was important. I wanted my children to follow God's command in Micah 6:8 "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?" While that was not always easy to model, it was important! I wanted my children to be able to live what they learned outside of our home and carry that conduct and thought into their own families.

So, how does conduct relate to stewardship? I believe that God expects us to take care of his creation, especially each other. By following His command to love one another and treat each other as we want to be treated, we are continually raising up one another to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

**KATHY FERLIN**



## STEWARDSHIP AS MANAGEMENT

CONGRATULATIONS!! You have just been promoted to manager. That is an announcement anyone might like to hear in the workplace if only because it might come with a pay raise.

But in fact, we are all managers. To manage suggests being in charge (of something), in control (of something), organizing, arranging, directing, making things happen according to a plan. We organize our day, a party, a class, a meeting, a meal, a vacation, our calendar, our wardrobe, and many other things on a daily basis. This managing can seduce us into a false premise. It is that because we can make some choices, we are in control not just of a few small things, but of much more - even ownership. We only need something like a COVID pandemic to help us recognize our limits.

Nonetheless, good management is always a participatory, collaborative, joint effort with certain divisions of labor and even a hierarchy of power and authority. Jesus and a certain centurion had a discussion about this one day. You will remember (Matthew 8:5-13) "For I am also a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes,' and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." Remember, Matthew tells us Jesus was "amazed" at the centurion's faith and healed his servant. This may not be a typical stewardship scriptural reference, but it does illustrate (among other things) management, division of labor, power and authority, hierarchy and even collaboration.

The goal for us as Christians is to get out of the trap of thinking that being a manager is about owning and controlling, not just a few small things but owning and controlling more, about entitlement and power over much more - too much more. Indeed, our goal is to get out of the control/ownership/entitlement mindset that dominates our world, our society and our culture to a mindset of humility, gratitude, spontaneous generosity and recognition of the true source of all good things, all power and all authority.

Now, we are charged to use our gifts and resources to achieve the largest and greatest goals we have or can even imagine. We are charged with organizing, arranging, directing and making things happen to accomplish those goals - in short, we are charged with managing the gifts God has given us to accomplish the mandate God has given us. Do you think you can manage that?

**EDWARD W. SITES, PH.D.**

## STEWARDSHIP AS DIRECTION

My name is Barbara Artuso and my word is DIRECTION. I would like to share with you how I used the gifts God gave me to provide direction to others.

I am so blessed. I was blessed in having parents who valued education, and were willing to work and sacrifice to provide me with many years of higher education. That was a gift from God. Certainly, my intellectual ability to study and to learn what was necessary during those years is not of my own making; that, too, is a gift from God. My health was maybe the greatest blessing, as it has enabled me to be active and productive throughout my life. Being geographically located in a county where there were colleagues - especially at the firm where I worked for almost 20 years - who encouraged and supported me was not an accident; you got, it was a gift from God. Maybe most significantly, there was the gift of God in the fruit of the Holy Spirit received in my baptism.

Now, what should I do with those gifts?

I practiced law for almost 40 years. I believe that my doing so was using the gifts God gave me, and I hope that my doing so glorified God.

For example, early in my practice I represented a lot of people who were seeking a divorce, or custody of minor children, or support for their (now single parent) families. These people were under stress, for sure! They sought a specific legal outcome, of course, which required my knowledge and (eventually) experience; hopefully, I could provide that direction. But that was not the only direction they needed. They needed to be heard - some had been abused, betrayed, disappointed. Before I offered direction, I needed to listen with understanding so that I knew how to offer direction. The direction included explaining the law and the processes and how we would try to achieve their objectives. But the direction I offered was not just telling people what to do; it also involved calming them, and sometimes modifying their expectations, and maybe even helping them change the course they desired from their legal journey. The patience, kindness, and gentleness of the Holy Spirit working through me were truly a gift from God.

I also practiced criminal defense law. Here were people who clearly needed direction! How would Jesus have treated the children of God who were accused of crimes? They were often neglected as children, impoverished, sometimes addicted or homeless. They had not made good judgements to get them to where they were, and they might not have responded to being told what to do without the compassion Jesus showed to such people. In my effort to give direction with compassion, I was blessed by that gift of God.

Toward the end of my practice I began representing people who were sick and/or injured and could not support themselves through working. I worked to obtain for them benefits available from the federal government. I gave them direction as to what benefits were available and how we would work together to obtain them. In the alternative, I gave

them direction away from such benefits when I felt they would be unsuccessful in pursuing them; instead, I directed them to other job programs or other educational opportunities. This was both the most direction I gave, and the most satisfying. In this area of practice more than the others I felt I changed lives for the better. Now that was a gift from God!

Speaking of changing lives for the better, I eventually became an Administrative Law Judge for the Social Security Administration. There I had the ability to provide life-changing direction in the decisions I made about whether or not people were entitled to disability benefits. I considered these cases carefully and seriously, using all of the gifts of God I've already mentioned, knowing the impact they would have.

After all of those stories, you may be wondering what DIRECTION has to do with Stewardship. Well, my understanding of living a life of stewardship is that we first recognize that all of our gifts - health, education, opportunity - are not coincidences or "luck". They are gifts from God. And they are not given to us for our own purposes; rather, we are to use them to glorify the God whom we worship, in grateful response to our having received them! I have tried to live that life of stewardship, and my prayer for you is that you devote yourselves to discerning the gifts God has given you, and finding ways to use them to serve.

## **BARBARA ARTUSO**

### QUESTIONS:

What gifts has God given you that might help you give others direction?

Have you ever had occasion to use those gifts to give direction?

How can you give direction gracefully and to the glory of God?

Can you think of a time when someone else gave you direction and, if so, did you feel as if that person was using gifts from God to do so?

## STEWARDSHIP AS GUIDANCE

Guidance: leadership, instruction, or direction; to council

Whether it is as a Mom, a sister, a friend, a pastor or as the Director of Spiritual Care and Congregation and Community Liaison at Glade Run Lutheran Service, much of my day is spent guiding, providing direction and instruction, leading and counselling.

I guide our son, TJ, to make good choices. I guide my family and friends in making decisions. I guide colleagues and those we serve at Glade Run through difficult situations and faith questions; and I guide congregations as they navigate change and transitions, as the process loses, and wrestle with difficult conversations. To guide is to coach and accompany people, which often means raising more questions than providing answers. It is to meet people where they are; to support them as they discover their own gifts-gifts of time, talent, and treasure and help them learn how to be faithful stewards.

Paul writes in Romans chapter 8, verse 6: *"We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us"*. As children of God, each of us has been freely given unique gifts and abilities to be used to bring about the Kingdom of God. We have been set apart/called to be faithful stewards of these gifts.

God has given us these gifts not for our own purpose but for the common good. These gifts are meant to be shared with one another. We have been called to guide, to lead, to instruct, to provide direction and counsel to the people, places, and things that are entrusted to our care. But more than that, we are called to guide; we are called to seek guidance from God. In Psalm 25: 4-5,8-10 David proclaims:

- 4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord;  
teach me your paths.
- 5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.
- 8 Good and upright is the Lord;  
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
- 9 He leads the humble in what is right,  
and teaches the humble his way.
- 10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Personally, I regularly seek guidance from people and from God. I even sought guidance when writing this devotion. Through much of my life more than I have provided guidance, I have been guided. There are very few decisions I have made without first seeking guidance from others. I have been blessed with so many people in my life who have guided me through life decisions, challenges, and day to day situations. People who helped me discover my gifts and where God was calling me. Academic and Sunday School

teachers, pastors, colleges, and friends who empower me; gently guiding me in stewarding faithfully the many gifts God has entrusted to my care.

I am who I am today as a Pastor and a person because of those who have guided me along the way. We need one another, to be good and faithful stewards, we need the support and guidance of those around us and most importantly from God. My constant prayer to God is "Thy Will Be done". Both in big and little decisions, I pray for God to guide and direct me, and that I may follow God's will. I pray that God will guide the work we do and the decisions we make, as individuals, communities, a nation and as the body of Christ. And then I pray we will humble ourselves and follow God's direction and guidance.

God had set us apart as Stewards; as guides not for our own purposes or for control but in accordance to God's will and way. Even as Stewards, God is still in charge. I know I need to be reminded that this way or that way, my way or your way are never the right ways unless it is God's way. I know I need to be reminded that God is ever present and ultimately in control. I know I need to get out of the way for God's way; in order for God to work through me. And knowing all of that I know I will still fall short and that God's love will remain the same. God's will be done. God's Kingdom will come.

That is the Good News I know I need to hear today in a time where everything seems so polarized, divided and out of my control. Maybe this is the gospel news you need to be reminded of too; the good news you have been longing to hear. God is with us, guiding, directing, leading, instructing and counseling. May we lean into the Good News and open ourselves up so that God may lead and guide us as we steward the gifts we have been given. May God's will be done in through and among you.

## **PASTOR CHRISTINA HOUGH**

### **Discussion Questions:**

Where have you guided someone or when have you been guided by someone?

Would you consider yourself someone who often provides guidance or someone who seeks guidance?

When have you sought God's guidance? What was your experience? What happened when you surrendered to God's direction versus your own?



## STEWARDSHIP AS ADMINISTRATION

Hello, my name is Deann George.

Administration. Is it important? What do administrators do? There are many different types of administrators.

- Administrative Assistant
- Contract Administrator
- Network Administrator
- Database Administrator
- Payroll Administrator
- Benefits Administrator
- Hospital Administrator
- School Administrator
- Church Administrator

And we all know that running a household or family takes some administrative skill.

***Administration must be important.***

However, we often don't think about the value of the work necessary for effective administration. Sometimes administrative tasks are seen as bothersome, tedious or downright boring. I've seen eyes glaze over when a budget is passed out for review. Have you ever heard a child say that when they grow up they want to be... an Administrator? I'm really not feeling excited about Administration right now.

Let's google Administration....boring administration.

Here's something I found: Admin can be soul-sucking. From horrendous tedium, to sheer volume: ...we hate administrative tasks. In fact, many aspects of admin have been linked to a rise in depression.

So, let's talk about... fireworks. This past summer I enjoyed a beautiful fireworks display over the lake at camp. The fireworks could be seen in the sky as well as their reflection on the lake. And it lasted a glorious half an hour. It was awesome! During the show I noticed the people on the other side of the lake who were making the fireworks display happen. And before that evening, people had to design the whole show and the plans had to incorporate safety at all times. Someone had to coordinate the event with the campground. Someone had to make sure regulations were followed. Someone had to purchase all the necessary supplies and materials. Someone had to pay the bills and employees. It's sounding like a lot of administration had to take place behind the scenes before this beautiful fireworks display became a reality!

In many areas of our lives we trust in administration being done behind the scenes. Sometimes great skill or giftedness is required and sometimes what's required may be more routine. Regardless, effective administrators are accountable over time, demonstrating care and earning trust.

Administration is important in business, in families, in church, in everyday life. But administration is not exciting to most people. And that's ok. "There's a lot of beauty in ordinary things." And that's a quote by Pam from the series finale of ***The Office***.

## **DEANN GEORGE**

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What in your experience or your church's experience demonstrates that Administration is an important part of Stewardship? This may be a positive example or a negative example/problem.
2. Think of someone you consider a good administrator. What behaviors or qualities does this person demonstrate?

## STEWARDSHIP AS GOVERNANCE

When we think of the word “governance” today, we probably think of our government and in today’s climate we immediately either engage in a very impassioned conversation or run for the hills with our hands over our ears. The concept of governance for us is tainted in many ways. But what if we look at governance as an act of stewardship? Let’s think about that.

In Genesis, God gave Adam and Eve a mandate to “fill the earth and subdue it; to “rule over it.” God had given Adam and Eve all of creation as this incredible gift and in essence said to them “be responsible for it,” “take care of it.” Today, we are prone to think that in order to govern that we need to be in a formal position to do so and if we’re not in that formal position, well then that’s someone else’s responsibility. And while there are indeed formal governance positions, I believe that governance as we understand the Biblical perspective really isn’t about our position. After all if we “oversee the control or direction of something” well, that is the very definition of governance.

Adam and Eve governed over creation. So if we are on a board of an organization we oversee and control the direction of that organization. If we are a teacher, we oversee and control the direction of our classroom and the students. If we are a parent, we oversee the direction of our children. If we clean houses, we oversee making sure a home is clean.

Stewardship is taking care of what God has graciously given to us. He has given each of us gifts and talents that He expects us to take care of and use in an act of worship for His Glory—to steward if you will. I believe that worship is not and should not be reserved for Sunday mornings. All of our lives are meant to be worship lived out for the common good. Our work is meant to be worship. Our parenting is meant to be worship. Our very lives are meant to be stewarded in an act of worship to bring God glory.

I have an incredible opportunity every day in my work with Lutheran Senior Life to steward the gifts that God has given me to impact the lives that He has entrusted into our care and the lives of the people I work with. How is God calling you to steward the gifts that He has given you, in your everyday walking around, ordinary, going to work life, to bring Him glory?

**LAURA ROY**

## STEWARDSHIP AS HANDLING

Let's face it, when it comes to stewardship, yes we know it is important, yes we know it is serious, yes we know it can be boring. When was the last time you saw an action adventure movie with the tag line including time talent and treasure?

So my task today is to talk a little bit about the word handling as it pertains to stewardship and do so before you lose interest and move on to the next video. Seriously, perhaps looking at a synonym for stewardship can help find a new perspective.

When I say handling what comes to mind for you? Go ahead blurt it out, I'll wait. Oh sorry, thought we were on a Zoom call for a moment. This time it's just me talking to the computer and so I can't hear you because you are not there.....yet. Well I'm sure you had something great to say, we'll have to catch up sometime to delve into that.

So since I can't hear you I'll go ahead and take my turn to talk about the word handling. When I think of handling, I think of taking responsibility to do something; these phrases come to mind:

- Who's handling that?
- I have a handle on that.
- Handling also reminds me of taking care, to protect something
- Handle with care
- shipping and handling
- In sports when a ball is bobbled, they say He Can't find the handle

Handling can also mean taking care to oversee something to its conclusion.

- You know like a project or huge corporate initiative or Handel's Messiah –
- Ahhh, wrong handle, Just checking if you are listening

Handling also means to touch or feel or hold something.

Think of your most prized possession. How do you handle that? Do you put gloves on first? Is there unwrapping involved with many protective layers?

So what does handling have to do with stewardship?

It has everything to do with it.

Toil as we may for what we have, none of it is ours, it's God's on loan to us. As we act as stewards of what God has given us, we take the responsibility for handling or caring for what has been generously given to us. As we consider our response to God's generosity, we own that response and we handle it to its conclusion.

As we step back and consider the bigger picture beyond our own lives and the lives of

those close to us we realize that life on this Earth is relatively short. We need to make the most of each day by thanking God for it and handling ourselves in a way that in pleasing to God.

The saying has become trite but it is so true, it is so much better to give than to receive. It's the truth, Can you handle that truth?

So that's what I have for you today, my time is up. As you may be thinking and my buddy Handel said many times: Alleluia

**ANDRE FRANCOIS**



## STEWARDSHIP AS OPERATION

Webster defines operation as "A procedure that is a part of a series in some work...."

When I reflect on the word operation as defined by Webster and its relationship to stewardship several things come to mind. First, in my life, that means that the words "some work" mean God's work as defined by the mission of the organization. Secondly, the words "a part of a series" means I am working with others to achieve the mission and my responsibilities are part of the whole.

I have been blessed to have the opportunity over the years to serve in a number of organizations, many related to the church. I was employed for 27 years as the administrator of a large social service agency. I also served as a volunteer officer or treasurer of our seminary, our synod, a camp, and my congregation. In each instance, the organizations mission and my mission were compatible, and I could support them with my time, talents, and resources.

In each of these organizations I have found myself involved with money and budgets. I took seriously my role in seeing that each organization was run on solid financial practices. I also know it is important that organizations choose wisely what activities and programs in which to become involved and to insure the activities advance their mission.

We as Christians and Lutherans often find conversations about personal money distasteful. Stewardship activities are seen as fund raising and therefore an activity people want to avoid. I have learned several things.

- I have learned that mission without money does not work.
- I have learned that asking for money is distasteful to me.
- I have learned that many people believe in the same missions that I do.
- I have learned that asking people to join me in supporting well defined missions can be enjoyable because the community of believers can do wonderful things when we work together.

I have learned that being "a part of some work" in God's Mission is true stewardship.

**BRANDON JAMES**

## STEWARDSHIP AS OVERSIGHT

I'm Bev Banyay, a retired pastor and former teacher and social worker. Many of the activities I conducted included the task of overseeing what others did. Oversight has two meanings, either omissions due to carelessness or supervision by keeping a watchful eye on what was happening. I'm talking about the second definition.

To be a watchful eye means not to do something but to see that something is done. This may include some directions and demonstrations to prepare another person to complete a task or project. My mother showed my cousin Jim and me how to measure ingredients to bake cookies. Then she watched as we made a mess of the entire kitchen while we measured, mixed and then put cookie dough on sheets to bake cookies. Eventually we could bake cookies and sort of clean up our mess with mom's encouragement and patience. Another example of oversight was managing a softball game once the season began. First I had to give clear instructions to the players and encourage them as they gained skills and knowledge of the game. Once the game was underway, I could only keep a watchful eye on the action, offering helpful hints whenever possible. I could not play the game for the team. My role was now to oversee the action.

Stewardship within congregations and synods also requires oversight...seeing that things happen as they should. Council officers and chairs need clear descriptions of their duties in order to perform at maximum capacity. Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, music directors, VBS personnel, congregational support staff and custodians also need clear direction, support and supplies so they are equipped to successfully execute their duties. Church councils need to equip others and provide oversight so things happen in a congregation. Of course pastors, in addition to preaching, teaching, visiting and administering the sacraments, also serve in the stewardship role of oversight in congregations.

Likewise our synod staff plays a similar role for congregations, offering pastoral care, supply preachers, equipping committees with personnel and knowledge, offering workshops and other instructions in order to assist our congregations in doing what we are called to do: to uplift people by spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

### PASTOR BEV BANYAY

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are the benefits of overseeing activities?
2. What problems are often encountered?
3. What assistance can the synod provide to assist overseeing the congregation's mission?
4. How do clear directions, expectations, and support assist others in doing their jobs?
5. How does the task of overseeing activities help define problems, roadblocks, and staff support needs?

## STEWARDSHIP AS SUPERVISION

Hi! I'm Deb Roberts, the Executive Director at Lutherlyn. One of my roles at Lutherlyn is to supervise the staff and to train the staff to then supervise our campers. "Supervision" is the word related to Stewardship that I am focusing on. So, the first thing I did was go to the dictionary and look up the word "Supervise" and the first definition that comes up is "to keep watch over". When I read that I immediately thought of the Christmas story when we hear about the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. Of course they were keeping watch over their flocks... their flocks were important to them and to their livelihood. A shepherd is the supervisor of the flock. Then I think about the things that I feel called to keep watch over or to supervise. I keep watch over my kids, I keep watch over my family, I keep watch my home, I keep watch over Lutherlyn, over the campers and staff, over the ministry that happens through camp, over the physical property that I am called to care for... to keep watch over... to supervise. Coincidentally, these are the same things that I most often pray to God every day to keep watch over.

I love this idea of "supervision" as being a part of stewardship because it can be so easy to think of a supervisor as a step above or a step removed or even as bossy... But when I think about the best supervisors that I have had throughout my life, they were supervisors who worked hard to make me better... Who made sure that I was equipped to do the task that was presented to me... That took the time to notice my gifts, to teach me, and to encourage me along the way... Not just to make me better but so the people or places or things that I was supervising were well cared for and able to thrive. That sure sounds like stewardship to me! As God's children we are called to be good stewards of God's creation... Of all that God has given to us. And so I am called by God to keep watch over... or to supervise the things that God has entrusted to my care. My family, Lutherlyn, the Church. You are called to watch over... To supervise God's work in the world. To use your gifts, your talents, and your resources to care for, to watch over, to supervise God's work through the ministry of your congregation, of the larger Church, and all over the world.

**DEACON DEB ROBERTS**

# THANK YOU

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who gave of their time and talents to make this project come together. We have been blessed with your gifts.