



TIME · TALENT · TREASURE

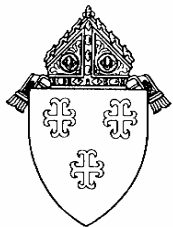
A

GUIDE

FOR THE

STEWARDSHIP

LAY WITNESS PRESENTER



PREPARED BY:

THE OFFICE OF STEWARDSHIP & DEVELOPMENT  
DIOCESE OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE STEWARDSHIP LAY WITNESS PRESENTATION**

An effective vehicle for promoting the concept of Christian stewardship, the lay witness presentation is usually delivered after the celebrant's homily by a member of the parish community that is currently practicing and embracing stewardship as a way of life.

The purpose of the stewardship lay witness presentation is two-fold. First, the presentation serves as a way to encourage and inspire others to become good stewards. Second, a talk by an individual, couple, or even children, can provide a wonderful opportunity for both witnesses to share, and parishioners to hear, real life stories of how stewardship becomes the motivating force behind our actions as we live out our baptismal promise to be a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ.

## **TIPS FOR COMPOSING AND PRESENTING YOUR LAY WITNESS PRESENTATION**

- 1.) **Introduce yourself.** - Although many of your fellow parishioners know who you are, talk briefly about your family, the number of years you have been a parishioner, and your involvement in the life of the parish.
- 2.) **Properly define Christian stewardship.** – Giving back a portion of our time, talent and treasure in gratitude to God for all His many blessings.
- 3.) **Discuss what led you to your practice of Christian stewardship.** – Share how you first became aware of the concept of stewardship. Discuss such questions as: “Were you reluctant to commit to the practice of good stewardship? How did your family react to the idea? How has placing God first in your life changed your everyday interactions with your friends and family?”
- 4.) **How have you grown as a steward?** – Speak about how stewardship has affected your own journey of faith. Discuss how you and your family share your time and talent. Talk about the rewards of your stewardship.
- 5.) **Encourage your fellow parishioners to experience stewardship as a way of life.** – Ask each person to reflect on God's many blessings in their lives. Then, urge them to respond through involvement in parish life as a way of sharing their gifts of time, talent and treasure in gratitude to God for all His countless blessings.
- 6.) **Write out your talk word for word using double spacing and large print.** – If comfortable, use an outline, notes, or index cards as a guide which will help your presentation come across as being natural.
- 7.) **Practice, practice, practice!** – Rehearse your talk aloud in front of a mirror. Deliver it to your spouse, family, or pastor and ask for their critique.
- 8.) **Be sure to...**
  - ...Explain that stewardship means giving of our substance and not of our surplus.
  - ...Talk about how stewardship is not about “giving to needs” but is about “needing to give.”
  - ...Emphasize that there are three components to stewardship: Time, Talent, and Treasure.
- 9.) **Most importantly, remember to be sincere, enthusiastic, and friendly.**

**Please note: The three sample lay witness presentations that follow have been provided as a guide for you in preparing your own individual presentation. Serving only as models, take the spirit of stewardship from these talks and prepare your own personal remarks so you are comfortable with them.**

## **STEWARDSHIP LAY WITNESS PRESENTATION # 1**

**(Time and Talent Phase)**

Stewardship. What is it? How do we do it? Will we like it? Does it hurt? Will it work for us? Why should we do it?

These are the many questions that passed through my mind as we first considered stewardship as a process in my parish. The more I thought about it, the more I became convinced stewardship was something our parish should do. I guess I was really experiencing my own conversion to stewardship as a way of life. I kept seeing that the Church could never flourish and grow if everyone was supporting it like it was, with a contribution each week that I would never miss.

As I look back at my own decision on stewardship and its maturation in the last five years, I notice that my ideals have changed some. There were lots of reasons that I felt we should begin stewardship in our family. God has been very good to us. My husband and I have two healthy, happy children.

We have finally passed through the struggling years in our own business and now had time to think about other things. As I began to think about the Church and what it means to me, I realized that if everyone was making the kind of limited volunteer and financial commitment that I was, then the Church would not be here for my children. There was no other way it could continue with no higher level of support from me and other parishioners.

Besides, I had great expectations of the Church. It should be well equipped to teach my children all about the wonders of God. It should be able to care for the sick, feed the needy, care for the elderly.

If my expectations were right, then I had to do my part to make them a reality. I was already giving some of my time and some of my talents to the Church. But there had to be a strong commitment of time and a commitment of treasure if the Church was going to be able to do all the things I wanted it to.

Once I decided that perhaps stewardship was something our family needed to think about, I was rather hesitant to bring it up for family discussion. My husband is non-Catholic. Would he feel the same as I do? How would we handle contributions of time and treasure to two churches? After we talked about how we felt and agreed that it was something we would try, my husband offered a simple solution. We would give one-fourth of our treasure and time to his church and three-fourths to my church since our two children were members of our parish. We have never had a problem with this method.

Since we made our decision on stewardship, I think our outlook on lots of things has changed. We have become more supportive of various worthwhile needs and organizations in the community. I think it opened an avenue of thought that allows us to give without always questioning what we will get in return.

I came to embrace stewardship through the Church, but I have grown in stewardship to include the entire community. I feel that God expects us to minister to all people. My gift that fulfills my stewardship may be given to anyone who needs it. It is the giving and the support of God's children that is important. The spiritual rewards and the feeling of accomplishment that you are following God's way are the important things that you will reap from stewardship. You will know you are succeeding when the spirituality and feelings of stewardship far surpass the questions of how much you should give.

My first encounter with stewardship was in 1987. I sat in my parish church in Cranston, Rhode Island and listened to two people from Jacksonville, Florida tell us their story and ask us to consider giving a percentage of our income and more of our time to the Church and community.

Up until that time, I had thought I was doing pretty well. I had always given what I thought was generous to the Church...especially in terms of money. I had been taught to “contribute to the support of the Church,” both in the parochial school I attended in Philadelphia, and by my parents. When we were growing up, there was no Saturday Vigil Mass. Saturday night was the time to get ready for Sunday. Baths, polishing shoes, washing and curling hair, and getting our church envelopes ready were all part of the ritual. My dad put \$5.00 in his envelope in the 1950’s and each of us four kids put .10 in ours. These were placed on the mantle behind my mom and dad’s wedding picture, ready to be picked up on our way to church on Sunday morning. When I grew up and got a job, I put \$5.00 in my envelope. I figured that was what grownups did.

We never consciously thought about the giving of time. It was just sort of expected that we would run errands for our neighbor who had only one leg, or cut the grass of the elderly lady across the street. It was just part of what you did when you took food to a family who had a death or someone in the hospital. These were the things I continued to do as an adult without ever giving more thought as to how much time was involved or why I was doing it.

It was only after listening to the folks from Jacksonville that I began to realize I wasn’t even close to giving in proportion to what I had. My dad’s \$5.00 in the 1950’s and mine in the 1980’s were entirely two different things. The little “good deeds” for other people were nice, but kind of sporadic.

My life has been richly blessed. I had a family who loved deeply, parents who sacrificed to bring up four children and instilled in each of us a strong sense of Church and morality. I was well educated, had a job, a home, friends and reasonably good health. God had given me many blessings...and I had to give serious thought as to how I was responding to His gifts. It took a while for me to do something, because I didn’t think I could raise my level of monetary giving, and I was pretty sure I didn’t have any “spare time” to volunteer. I eventually decided to “take the plunge,” but only on a trial basis of three months. I would give a tithe of 10% to my church and other charities, and I would find two more hours each week to volunteer for something. I fully expected to be able to say at the end of three months, “OK, Lord. I tried, but it doesn’t work.” That way, I figured I would be “off the hook.”

Well, at the end of three months, I found that all of the bills had been paid, I wasn’t suffering from malnutrition, I saved some money, bought clothes and went to the movies a few times. I also found out that I wasn’t worrying about money nearly as much as I had been. I had become a reading tutor in our county literacy program and loved it. I obviously wasn’t “off the hook,” but was hooked.

Since that summer in 1997, the one overwhelming change in life has been a deepening of my faith. I really trust that God loves me and will take care of me. He has done it...even when I wasn’t sure it could be done.

I guess my response to those who question the concepts of stewardship, or who are hesitant, is this: At least give it a try. Give God the opportunity to show you that He is a loving and generous God. He can only do that when we give up control and take that step in faith.

Stewardship means different things to different people. Let me share with you what stewardship has come to mean to me. Reflecting back on the time spent growing up in Rhode Island, I've realized more and more not only how loving my parents were, but also how wise they were.

I learned a lot from my parents, but there are four things I learned from their example that have had a particular impact on my life. First was that God loves us. He is good and we can trust Him. Second was that each of us is given certain gifts and talents and one of our responsibilities in life is to discover what those gifts and talents are, develop them and use them to benefit others. Third was that to whom more is given, more is expected. Fourth was that having a job and spending time with your family is important but not enough. We also need to spend time being with and helping others. With that kind of learning and my parent's example, I did not have a great deal of difficulty in grasping the concept of stewardship of time and talent. I didn't call it that, but I did it. From the time I was in high school onward, I made sure I spent time doing things for and with other people, mostly through different types of volunteer work. As I continued to give of my time and talent, I realized that I was growing spiritually. God and other people became a more important part of my life.

After graduating from college and moving to Massachusetts, I continued to give of my time and talent through various church groups and community boards. Yet something was still missing. You see, I gave of my time and talent but not my treasure. I reasoned that I spent so much time in church and community activities that I didn't need to give regularly to the Church or other community groups. Sure, I gave some, but it was sporadic and unplanned.

It wasn't until my wife and I attended an "Engaged Encounter" that I started to look even more seriously at my relationship with God. We realized that we couldn't hold back on any area of our giving because God wasn't holding back on any area of His giving. We also decided that we wanted God to be the center of our marriage. That led us to a decision to start giving of our treasure in a planned and proportionate way. We started giving two percent of our income to the Church and other charities in 1998. Five years later, we are giving at eight percent of our income to the Church and other charities. As we continued to give, we've learned that we are growing more spiritually and that our faith is deepening. By giving as we have, we have tried to place material things and money in their proper perspective. That has caused us to look at what we need versus what we want. For example, when we bought a new home almost two years ago, we bought a somewhat smaller house than we might have if we hadn't been practicing stewardship of treasure.

Stewardship has become a way of life for us. It's not always easy, but we try to live it. Presently, I am spending eight hours a week in volunteer work outside of my job and my wife is spending three hours per week in volunteer work. In the area of treasure, 80 percent of our giving is Church-related while the other 20 percent goes to community agencies. My wife and I are planning to move to the biblical tithe, 10 percent of our income, next month.

Stewardship of time, talent and treasure has been and will continue to be an important part of our lives.

## **SCRIPTURAL VERSES ON STEWARDSHIP FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT**

*“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should contribute so freely? For everything is from you, and we only give you what we have received from you...O Lord our God, all this wealth that we have brought together to build you a house in honor of your holy name comes from you and is entirely yours.”* (1 Chronicles 29:14-16)

*“When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest...and, putting them in a basket...you shall go to the priest.. (who will) set it in front of the altar of the Lord, your God.”* (Deuteronomy 26:1-4)

*“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow.”* (Proverbs 3:9-10)

*“One is lavish yet grows still richer; another is too sparing; yet is the poorer. The person who confers benefits will be amply enriched, and the one who refreshes others will be refreshed.”* (Proverbs 11:24)

*“In generous spirit pay homage to the Lord, be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution show a cheerful countenance, and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy. Give to the Most High as He has given to you, generously, according to your means. For the Lord is one who always repays, and He will give back to you sevenfold.”* (Sirach 35:7-10)

## **SCRIPTURAL VERSES ON STEWARDSHIP FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT**

*“Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they pour into the fold of your garment. For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you.”* (Luke 6:38)

*“You need to recall the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, who said, “There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.”* (Acts 20:35)

*“Whereas the one who did not know them and who nonetheless deserved to be flogged will get off with fewer stripes. When much has been given a man, much will be required of him. More will be asked of a man to whom more has been entrusted.”* (Luke 12:48)

*“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”* (1 Peter 4:10)

*“He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Everyone must give according to what he has inwardly decided; not sadly, not grudgingly, for God loves a cheerful giver. God can multiply his favors among you so that you may always have enough of everything and even a surplus for good works.”* (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

**If you would like more information about your lay witness presentation,  
please call the Office of Stewardship & Development at 277-2121.**