

FAITH SHARING

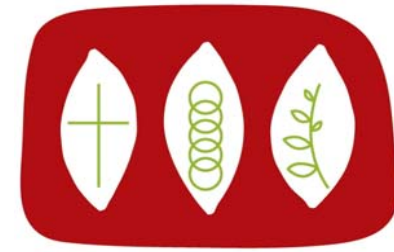
CONVERSATION THAT TRANSFORMS US

In this ever-changing, ever-expanding global world, our awareness that each person has an unique but limited experience continues to grow. Without conversation, honest and respectful dialogue, we have only our own truth. Conversation can call us out of ourselves to hear and consider the points of view and experiences of others.

When Christians gather to share faith and study the scriptures, they are gathering together as church. Jesus promised to be with us wherever two or more gather in his name.

Faith sharing is dynamic and relational. It requires participants to respect and honor one another. As a group, talk about what you value in how participants treat one another. Your group may suggest principles such as:

- ** Respect everyone. Each of us has his or her own unique experience that can contribute to the fuller truth the group sees collectively.
- ** Listen intently; pay attention to others' efforts to communicate their own story. Listening attentively is an act of respect.
- ** Communicate your experience; put it into words, share it with the group. Each must accept responsibility of contributing. Everyone's experience will be richer for it.
- ** Always ask questions when others' contributions do not make sense to you. Restate what you think you heard but ask for affirmation or clarification.
- ** Be comfortable with silent times; do not talk just to fill up quiet space.
- ** Keep conversations confidential. What is said in the room—stays in the room. When people share at a personal level, trust is essential.



ADVANCING
THE MISSION

Small Faith Sharing Group Five Week Program

for the
Stewardship Campaign:
Advancing the Mission

WEEK ONE **ALL IS GIFT**

Introduction to Stewardship As a Way of Life

Participant's Guide

GENERAL FACILITATOR NOTES

Prepare for the meeting; calculate a time frame to follow. Have details set and ready ahead of the appointed gathering time.

Welcome everyone at the door. Distribute nametags if needed.

If someone is missing from your session—arrange for a quick check in and inform the rest of the group.

Arrange seating so that everyone can see each other easily.

Encourage people to stay with the group—discourage looking ahead.

At the end of the first session, decide who will serve as a facilitator for the next gathering.

Relax, enjoy one another, and let the Spirit do its work!

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible	Candle Matches
Bowl of Water	CD Player/Boom Box
Nametags	Markers, Pens, Pencils

Music Selections

(borrow from the Parish Media Center, the Choir Director, the Worship Committee, or the Faith Formation Staff)

SUGGESTED MUSIC

What Return Shall We Make

by Vince Ambrosetti, International Liturgy Publications

All You Works of God by Marty Haugen, GIA Publications

God, Beyond All Names by Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications

The Summons by John Bell, GIA Publications

We All Are One In Mission by Rusty Edwards, Hope Publishing

SUGGESTED READING

U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, *“Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response,”* Pastoral Letter of U. S. Bishops, 1992. See www.usccb.org/stewardship/index.htm

Robert F. Morneau, *Growing in Joy*. Winona, MN. St. Mary’s Press, 1998. See www.smp.org

Mitch Finley, *101 Ways to Happiness*. Liguori Publications, 2005. See www.liguori.org

Paul Wadell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice and the Practice of Christian Friendship*. Brazos Press, 2002. See www.brazospress.com

All Is Gift

Introduction to Stewardship
Week One of a Five Week Series

developed for the
Stewardship Campaign:
Advancing the Mission



Authored by Jackie Staley for the
Department of Stewardship & Pastoral Services
August 2006

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

Select some instrumental music to play now and spend these moments of silence in thanksgiving for all the goodness shared and enjoyed together. If time allows, members of the group could offer thanks for an insight or appreciation gained.

- Leader Let us recall the presence of God as we join together in our closing prayer:
- All God of goodness and giver of all gifts, thank you for our time together.
- Side 1 We ask your blessing on our families as we consider the deeper meaning of stewardship.
- Side 2 Help us to appreciate all that we have, all that we are, all that has been given to us, all that we have earned—
- Side 1 As gifts from you.
- Side 2 We ask for the grace to be true stewards with hearts full of gratitude and willingness to share.
- All We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, who taught us how to be “good stewards of your many gifts.”
Amen.

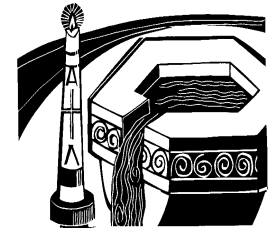
All is Gift

Week One

Introduction to Stewardship As a Way of Life

Display a Bible, a candle
and a bowl of water.
Open the Bible to Psalm 116.

The leader welcomes the members of the group. Each person introduces her/himself, sharing some of their expectations and hopes for this time together.



INTRODUCTION

read by leader as candle is lit

Fire and water – two symbols expressing our relationship to God – speak to us of our Catholic heritage. Moses experienced God in a burning bush. The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit was shown in tongues of fire at Pentecost. The fire of a candle symbolizes the light of Christ, shining over all of us gathered in Christ’s name.

Water in scripture is often referred to as “the saving waters” bringing to mind the Israelites’ crossing of the Red Sea from slavery to freedom.

The Church baptizes new members in water as a sign of being saved and belonging to the community.

Both symbols point to a change of life, a new direction, our bond of belonging.

OPENING PRAYER

Psalm 116:1,13,17,18

(All pause to recall the presence of God)

- Reader I What shall I return to the Lord
for all his goodness to me?
- All What shall I return to the Lord
for all his goodness to me?
- Reader II I loved the Lord,
who listened to my prayer,
who turned an ear to me on
the day I called.
- All What shall I return to the Lord
for all his goodness to me?
- Reader III I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the Lord.
- All What shall I return to the Lord
for all his goodness to me?
- Reader IV I will raise the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.
- All What shall I return to the Lord
for all his goodness to me?
- Reader V I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.
- All What shall I return to the Lord
for all his goodness to me?

FAITH IN ACTION

1. Discuss with your family your understanding of “all is gift.” Decide how you might apply that to your appreciation for your neighborhood environment.
2. Give thanks for the gift of clean water this week. Use it appreciatively, but economically. Thank God for the gifts which depend on water: life, health, refreshment, enjoyment.
3. Spend some gift of time with an elderly person whose quality of aging you admire. Listen for the recognition of gratitude for gifts of God throughout his/her life.
4. Draw up a personal list of choices you may be facing in the coming weeks or months using your talents and gifts. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you make wise and generous choices.
5. Use the gift of time by watching less TV in order to help with a parish project.



FAITH SHARING

1. Discuss how the saying “all is gift” can relate to you at this time in your life.
2. Use the opening prayer from Psalm 116 as a basis for discussing discipleship and stewardship.
3. In your life what could be the major obstacle to practicing stewardship in the context of Christian discipleship?
4. Who are some outstanding examples of stewardship for you? Why are they?



A READING

The introduction to the
U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops Pastoral Letter:
Stewardship: A Disciple's Response (1992)

Three convictions in particular underlie what we say in this pastoral letter.

1. Mature disciples make a conscious firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves.
2. Beginning in conversion, change of mind and heart, this commitment is expressed not in a single action, nor even in a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire *way of life*. It means committing one's very self to the Lord.
3. Stewardship is an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives.

Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be.

They are deeply aware of the truth that, “The Lord's are the earth and its fullness, the world and those who dwell in it.” (Psalm 24:1)

They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God's many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.

A REFLECTION

There once lived a family, Bob, Sue and children, whose busy family life of home, work, school, church was fairly routine. They managed comfortably, but tension rose if an outside event brought imbalance, such as illness, or any work, school, church or relationship crisis.



One day, problems arose that tipped the imbalance so far that Bob and Sue realized they needed to reexamine their priorities to get a broader, deeper sense of what to change in their home.

At Sunday Mass they heard these words from the prophet Ezekiel:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26



Their discussion and their prayer led them on a search. How is God the center, the foundation of our lives as a family? What do we expect from God? What does God expect of us? What kind of changes would add stability, peace and joy to each of us?

Bob and Sue were looking at a change of heart, like a conversion. They went to the "heart" of the matter, we say. They wanted to be good stewards of their lives.

Stewardship is a deep way of looking at one's life, rooted in prayer, acted out in service and sharing. Ultimately, if we see everything in life as a gift, then we receive God's gifts gratefully, nurture them responsibly and share them justly and generously.



Because *all is gift*, stewardship becomes a way of life.