

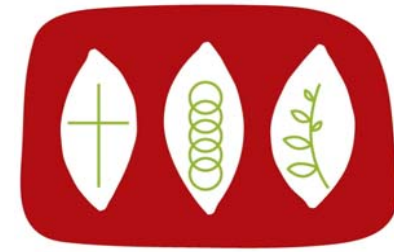
## FAITH SHARING CONVERSATION THAT TRANSFORMS US

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 FOUR A GENEROUS HEART Sharing

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 this 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  
Nametags/Markers  
Red hearts cut out of construction paper, one for each participant in the group.  
Music Selections  
(borrow from the Parish Media Center, the Choir Director, the Worship Committee, or the Faith Formation Staff)

CD Player/Boom Box  
Prayer Cloth

## SUGGESTED MUSIC

*Where Your Treasure Is* – Marty Haugen, GIA Publications

*What Return Shall We Make* – Vince Ambrosetti  
International Liturgy Publications

*City of God* – Dan Schutte, OCP Publications

*All That We Have* – Gary Ault, Damean Music (Distributed by GIA)

*Where Charity and Love Prevail* – World Library Publications

## 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](http://www.usccb.org/stewardship/index.htm)

Hershey, Terry, *Sacred Necessities: Gifts for Living with Passion, Purpose, and Grace*. Ave Maria Press, 2005. See [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com)

Schut, Michael, ed., *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective*. Living the Good News Publishers, Denver, Co., 2000. See [www.livingthegoodnews.com](http://www.livingthegoodnews.com)

Wicks, Robert, *Everyday Simplicity: A Practical Guide to Spiritual Growth*. Ave Maria Press, 2000. See [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com)

### **A Generous Heart—Sharing** *Introduction to Stewardship* Week Four of a Five Week Series

developed for the  
**Stewardship Campaign:**  
***Advancing the Mission***



Authored by Jackie Staley for the  
Department of Stewardship & Pastoral Services  
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## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*Some prayerful music is played before the closing prayer. Spend a few moments of silence in thanksgiving for all the goodness shared and enjoyed together. Pass out a heart to each person as a reminder of the theme of this sharing. Recall the presence of God.*

### Psalm 146: 2, 5, 7, 8

- Leader: Let us praise God all our days.
- Side I I will praise the Lord all my life,  
sing praise to my God while I live.
- Side II Happy those whose help is Jacob's God,  
whose hope is in the Lord, their God.
- Side I The Lord keeps faith forever,  
secures justice for the oppressed,  
gives food to the hungry.  
The Lord sets prisoners free.
- Side II The Lord gives sight to the blind.  
The Lord raises up those who are bowed down,  
The Lord loves the righteous.
- Leader: The Lord protects the stranger,  
sustains the orphan and the widow,  
but frustrates the way of the wicked.
- All Let us praise God all our days.  
The Lord shall reign forever,  
through all generations. Alleluia!

# A Generous Heart

## Week Four

### Sharing

Display a Bible with red hearts —  
one for each of the members  
of the group.

Open the Bible to 2 Corinthians

The leader welcomes the members of the group. If new members are present, each introduces her/himself. The leader can begin the session by reading the introduction aloud.



## INTRODUCTION

“Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”  
(Luke. 12:34)

Sharing comes from the heart, the symbol of love. The heart sustains life, so giving from the heart speaks of bold, generous sharing—giving that is both a privilege and the responsibility of a Christian steward.

## OPENING PRAYER

2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 10.

*(All pause to recall the presence of God.)*

- Leader      God's goodness lasts forever!
- All            God's goodness lasts forever!
- Reader I     Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
- All            God's goodness lasts forever!
- Reader II    Each must give as you have made up your mind, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- All            God's goodness lasts forever!
- Reader III   God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work.
- All            God's goodness lasts forever!
- Reader IV    The one who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness.
- All            God's goodness lasts forever!

## FAITH IN ACTION

1. Many parishes emphasize sacrificial giving, use those guidelines to determine your parish support. For more information on sacrificial giving, contact your parish stewardship chairperson..
2. Each day for a week, use one of the following passages from the *Gospel of Luke* for prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer. Reflect on how each passage relates to your life and family responsibilities.

12:13-21	16:9 -13	12:22-32
18:18-27	12:33-34	19:11-26
	14:28-33	

## Sacrificial Sharing

Weekly Giving				
Annual Income	1.5%	2.5%	5.0%	10%
\$10,000	\$3	\$5	\$10	\$20
\$20,000	\$6	\$10	\$20	\$40
\$30,000	\$9	\$15	\$30	\$60
\$40,000	\$12	\$20	\$40	\$80
\$50,000	\$15	\$25	\$50	\$100
\$60,000	\$18	\$30	\$60	\$120
\$70,000	\$21	\$35	\$70	\$140
\$80,000	\$24.50	\$40	\$80	\$160
\$90,000	\$27	\$45	\$90	\$180
\$100,000	\$30	\$50	\$100	\$200

## FAITH SHARING

1. What about the Bishops' words on sharing printed on page five challenge you? Relate that challenge to the Stewardship Campaign: *Advancing the Mission*.
2. How is stewardship as a conversion process especially needed when donating money to the church or charitable institutions?
3. What are the things you need to do if you want to be free from "the chains that bind" – anxiety over money matters?
4. How is limiting Christian stewardship to money matters missing the point? Could one be tithing and still be remiss as a Christian steward?
5. How does one balance personal financial needs with the need to be generous? How do you think God will judge us in this matter?



## A READING

excerpted from the  
U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops' Pastoral Letter:  
*"Stewardship: A Disciple's Response" (1992)*

While many Catholics are generous in giving of themselves as well as with their financial resources to the church, others do not respond to the needs in proportion to what they possess. Sharing is not an option for Catholics who understand what membership in the church involves. It is a serious duty. It is a consequence of the faith which Catholics profess and celebrate.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of the "faithful and prudent steward" as one whom a householder sets over other members of the household in order to "distribute the food allowance at the proper time." Evidently, good stewards understand that they are to share with others what they have received, that this must be done in a timely way and that God will hold them accountable for how well or badly they do it. For if a steward wastes the owner's goods and mistreats the other household members, "that servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful."

Lk.12:46

Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty. They dare not fail in charity and what it entails, and the New Testament is filled with warnings to those who might be tempted to substitute some counterfeit for authentic love. For example: "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?"

I John.3:17

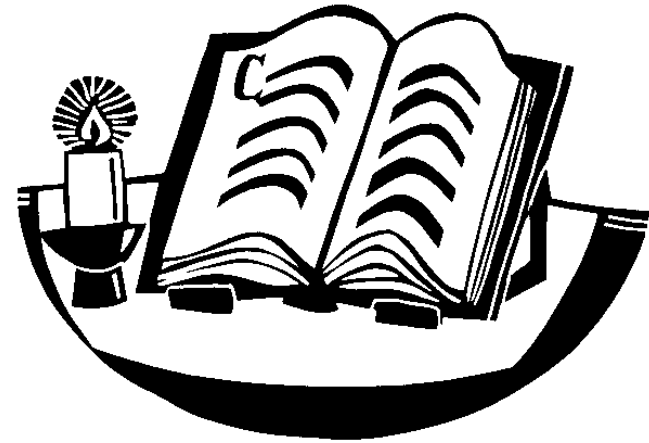
## A REFLECTION

Christian stewardship includes prayer, service and sharing as a way of life. A Christian steward recognizes

*“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.”* (Psalm. 24:1)

All is gift – even what we work hard to earn. Sharing God’s gifts is part of the picture of a steward. Sharing the money we receive is the part that runs against the grain of our consumer culture that says, “I worked hard for my money and it is mine, all mine.”

Bombarded with ads that pull us to want more conveniences and instant pleasure, Christians today have to counter these messages with their belief in the teachings of Jesus. The New Testament presents story after story, teaching upon teaching of the call to be generous with our resources. In the Gospel of Luke alone, there are fourteen teachings on the right use of riches within just eight chapters!



Is the Gospel of Luke anti-rich? No. This seems to be the message:

*Jesus said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God...[But] what is impossible for human beings is possible for God.”*

Luke. 18:24-27

In other words, if we are well-off and have the heart of a steward, Jesus draws us to God and frees us from the control money may have over us. We need not hoard nor be anxious over sharing these gifts.