Stewards by God's Design: The Three R's of the Christian Steward
Relationship with God
Facilitator's Guide

Background Material: "We were created to have meaning and purpose in our existence as image bearers of God. In the first three chapters of Genesis, we find that we were created for whole relationships that reflect the image of God on four levels: our relationship with God, with our self, with our neighbor and with creation…On the first level our life has meaning when we are at peace with our creator…The reality of our created nature is that we are shaped and formed for the distinct purpose of living in relationship with our Creator God…The first couple knew this peace and intimacy in the absence of sin. Today, it is in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ that we are restored and reconciled again to God. We cannot do it ourselves. This relationship has been bought for us with the highest possible price, the blood of Christ. God's original intent in creation is now the gift given to us to steward with gratitude and praise…If we were created for intimate relationship with God, then our purpose is to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. This is our first and highest calling and joy. Worship, sabbath rest, devotion, prayer, fasting, study, praise and presence are ways in which we fulfill our purpose in our relationship to God. Intimacy is not something we create; it is the result of total surrender that allows God to do something in us and for us. God draws us near as we submit ourselves to him. And our first and highest response is praise." R. Scott Rodin in The Steward Leader. Page 34.

Goal: That the participant would recognize relationships, responsibilities, and resources as gifts from God for which the steward is called to manage. The most important gift God gives us is His relationship to us in Christ.

Key Point: We are given the wonderful gift of our relationship with God by creation and redemption. We are faithful, wise, and fruitful stewards of this precious gift.

Opening Question: Ask the participants to name a person in their lives, besides their parents, who has had a big influence on them. Let them explain how that influence has shaped their lives.

Introduction: God created us to live in community. We relate to those around us in various ways. We have good relationships with some of the people we know and some of our relationships may not be so good. One thing we know about relationships, if they are going to be positive, is that they take work.

We will be discussing four relationships God calls us to steward: Our relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves, our relationship with others, and our relationship with creation.

Considering these four relationships, the most important one is our relationship with God. R. Scott Rodin wrote in his book, *The Steward Leader*, "We are first called to be stewards of our

relationship with God. That means that our worship, reading and study of the Scriptures, personal devotions and prayer life are acts of stewardship."

What do the following passages tell us about God?

- Genesis 1:1
  In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

  Answer: God is the creator of all that exists. This means that we are creatures who are responsible to the Creator.

- Psalm 24:1
  The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,

  Answer: God is the owner of everything. He created everything which makes Him the owner of everything. As Owner He has the right to do with His creation and His creatures as He sees fit. We are thankful that He is a loving and generous God who not only created us and owns us, but He also redeemed us, preserves us, and protects us.

- John 3:16
  For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

  Answer: God demonstrates His love and care for us by sending His only Son to live the perfect life we cannot live and take our sins upon Himself and pay for them on the cross. God not only created and preserves us, He redeems us through the precious blood of Jesus. God owns us twice. He owns us by creation and He owns us by redemption. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

- John 14:26
  But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

  Answer: Our God is a triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament to call us to faith through the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, and sanctifies and keeps us in the true faith.

What do the following passages tell us about God's expectations for us?

- Deuteronomy 10:12-13
  And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?

Answer: The Lord requires…

1. That we fear Him
2. That we walk in His ways
3. That we love Him
4. That we serve Him with our whole being
5. That we keep His commandments

- Micah 6:8
  He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

  Answer: Here the Lord asks us to…
  1. Do justice
  2. Love kindness
  3. Walk humbly with God

- Ephesians 2:10
  For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

  Answer: God expects us to do the good works He has prepared for us.

- 1 Corinthians 10:31-33
  So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

  Answer: God expects us to do everything to His glory. We look to His Word for guidance and seek to live as the redeemed children of God that we are. We do not give offense, but desire to let others see the good we do so that they will glorify God.

As stewards by God's design we take God's expectations of us seriously, and with the help of the Holy Spirit we do what He asks as we manage everything He has entrusted to our care.

Next, we turn to the first three commandments. In Luther's Small Catechism (2017) the following note is included regarding the Ten Commandments, "Christians often distinguish the Commandments in two parts—those that pertain to love for God (the first three) and those that pertain to love for the neighbor (the last seven)—and call them the two tablets (or tables) of the Law, since God wrote the Commandments on two stone tablets."

The first three commandments God gave His people at Mt. Sinai deal with our relationship with Him. In the 2017 edition of *Luther's Small Catechism*, it says this about the First Commandment,

"As Christians, we look to the one true God for all that we need. This is the God who created and sustains us, who redeemed us by giving Himself to be crucified for us in the God-man, Jesus, and who sanctifies us through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no other God."

- What does this commandment have to say about how we steward our relationship to God?

Answer: The First Commandment makes it clear that we belong to God. The fact that God is the one and only Owner makes a huge difference in how we live. We are creatures we are not the Creator. We are stewards we are not the Owner. Raymond Olson wrote in *Stewards Appointed*, "We owe everything we are to God. Nothing we will get out of life will be without His prior claim resting upon it and upon us. While He is under no obligation to us, we are under unremitting obligation to Him. We have not been given freedom to rule our lives and the world in which we find ourselves apart from the purposes and intentions of God. It is highly important since God has planned it this way, that we understand the plan. Otherwise, we should make short and dismal use of what we might assume to be freedom to use life without responsibility." Page 19. So, we steward everything looking to the Creator and Owner for guidance and direction.

The Second Commandment is summarized this way, "As Christians, we treasure and honor God's name with our prayers, praise, and witness."

- What does this commandment have to say about how we steward our relationship to God?

Answer: God has given His human creatures the gift of speech. How we use that gift is a part of our stewardship—especially as it relates to the name of God. Olson makes this point clearly in *Stewards Appointed*, "The man who is called to be a Christian steward is entrusted with the name of God. Great issues are involved in keeping this name an honored and respected one in the earth. This is no trivial trust, but one to which a man may well devote his fullest and finest capacities….It is important in his whole relationship to God that every part of God's revelation concerning Himself shall be continually remembered and reverently considered. If he uses God's name without respect, it is a proof that something serious has happened in his own attitude toward the one whose steward he is. Any attitude of irreverence and disrespect emphasizes the lack of importance this man gives to God…On the other hand, to give honor and strength and glory to God's name, is to give Him the proper place of attention and reverence. If He is the all-important one to us, there will be no doubt of our willingness to count on Him in all our responsibilities or needs…In this Commandment, as in the others, our response is not the response of slaves, but the response of Christian stewards as the redeemed people of God. It is because we fear and love God that we remember the Sabbath day. It is because we know that this is for our good and for our blessing. It is because we seek for the sacred moments in His presence that we obey the Commandment. We rejoice in the assurance that Jesus Christ, our Lord, works in us the desire to keep this Holy Day. In obeying this commandment we know we

are bearing witness to our Master and we are refreshing and renewing our own lives." Pages 23 and 29

The Third Commandment is summarized by these words, "As Christians, God's Word leads us to delight in His wonderous works of creation and redemption."

- What does this commandment have to say about how we steward our relationship to God?

Answer: One way in which we are to steward our time is to worship God regularly and frequently. We gather with God's people in community to pray, praise, and give Him thanks for all He has done and all He will do for us. Olson writes, "The Sabbath day is a time for worship. As we considered the Second Commandment, we noted how thoroughly important worship is for the Christian steward. His worship of God is a part of his recommitment of himself to God. It is the time when he lays hold upon all his resources to bear witness to God's glory and goodness. The Sabbath Day provides him with the specific time and circumstance in which this worship may reach its regular climax. The day is a gift to him to keep him a worshiping person and to draw him out of his absorption with himself and his world." Page 27

What else does the Bible tell us about stewarding our relationship with God?

- 1 Chronicles 16:11
  Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!

  Answer: God is to be our top priority in life. We seek Him and His presence by reading and studying His Word daily. Spending time with the Lord is a spiritual discipline.

- Philippians 4:6
  Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

  Answer: We put our trust in God and with gratitude we are in constant communication with Him in prayer. Prayer is a spiritual discipline.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
  All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

  Answer: God's Word is a Word of life. It provides us with what is needed to live a life pleasing to God. God's people do good works in response to the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. The study of God's Word is a spiritual discipline.

- Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Answer: The Word of God gives wisdom for teaching and correcting ourselves and each another. We worship Him with hymns and spiritual songs. Regular and frequent worship is a spiritual discipline.

- 1 Chronicles 16:29
  Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

  Answer: Bringing an offering is part of our worship. We need to do this so we don't forget who He is and that we are dependent upon Him for everything. Generosity in giving is a spiritual discipline.

- Acts 1:8
  But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

  Answer: The Holy Spirit empowers us to be witnesses to all that God has done for us in Christ. Sharing the faith God has worked in us is a spiritual discipline.

- 1 Peter 4:10
  As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

  Answer: As stewards by God's design, we manage the gifts God entrusts to us to help others. Service to our neighbor is a spiritual discipline.

Stewarding our relationship with God continues throughout our lifetime.

- What point does Peter make in 2 Peter 3:18?
  But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

  Answer: God expects us to grow in our relationship with Him. He provides the means for doing that in His Word and Sacraments.

Close with prayer: Thank you, Lord, for creating us and redeeming us with Your own precious blood. You have blessed us with Your presence, Your love, and Your care. We exist only because of You. May we, as stewards by Your design, live lives that give You all the glory and that bless our neighbors. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

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