

Characteristics of a Good Steward

I would like to thank everyone who has either emailed or called me about stewardship in their parish. I have heard some great stories about how God is at work in your stewardship ministry. Thank you, also, for your positive comments about the new diocesan website for stewardship. You can view the website at scstewardship.com.

In conversation with clergy and lay people across the Diocese, I have been asked, "What does a `good steward` or `biblical giver` look like?" There are certain practices the Bible upholds when it mentions giving. Developing these characteristics should be the goal of all Christian stewards. After reading through these, ask yourself, "How can I lead my congregation to implement these characteristics in their stewardship ministry?"

1. Intentional – Make a plan that regularly allows you to tithe to your church. St. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* Become intentional about your giving. This could mean sitting down with a calendar and marking which Sunday(s) you are planning to write a check to your church. Another way of assuring that you are giving regularly is to have your pledge automatically drafted out of your bank account and sent directly to your church. This way no matter how busy you are, you are showing that you care for your church financially. Seek to be an intentional giver to the glory of God.

2. Generous – The world is constantly sending us the following message through different forms of media: **Make being generous to self a priority, rather than first being generous to God.** This is a message that we must resist. We need to recognize that Jesus says there is a problem here. The problem is that we cannot serve two masters. Jesus makes this clear in Matthew 6:24 when he says, *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."* Each day Jesus is asking for our hearts. Jesus wants to be in relationship with us and to have our hearts turned toward Him. A key characteristic to being a "good steward" is having a generous heart.

3. Tithing or Proportional Giving – The bible calls us to percentage giving. Obviously, the tithe or ten percent of giving is our Biblical standard. In the Episcopal Church, this is the standard for giving. In the Diocese of South Carolina, we believe in the 10-10-10 plan of giving: a tithe by parishioners of 10% of their income to their own parish, a tithe of 10% of parish income to the diocese, and a tithe of 10% of diocesan income to outreach, whether to the national church, or to missions outside our own. As you make a plan for giving *"Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year"* so you can worship the Lord through your giving. Learn more by visiting scstewardship.com or email me at revjimtaylor@gmail.com.