

# StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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## True Stewardship of Time

**T**empus Fugit. Time flies. As each page falls off the calendar, the pace of our life seems to pick up speed. A wise grandmother once told her teenaged grandson, “Boy, life gets quicker as it goes by. Learn the lesson of the toilet paper roll. The closer you get to the end, the faster it spins!” Her wisdom is earthy, memorable and true!

This is true of stewardship leaders in the congregation. As September rolls around in the congregation that follows a traditional model of stewardship education, the time for choosing and implementing the fall stewardship emphasis is fleeing away. The warmth of the summer months will give way to the

crispness of fall. The lush green of summer will soon start to bear the hues of autumn. The growing season will give way to harvest sooner than many can imagine.

There is also change in the church climate, too. Many congregations will mark new beginnings in ministry. A rally day may kick off a Sunday school that was dormant during the warm summer months of travel. Catechetical instruction is likely underway again moving another group of young Christians deeper into the Bible and Catechism, moving them closer to the public profession of their faith and welcome to the Lord’s Table. The choirs of all ages are once again rehearsing to add their gifts and talents to the weekly Divine

Service. School is well underway, with the extra-curricular activities that go with it. As the fall begins in the parish, life and activity begin to pick up as well. The roll of life is once again spinning very quickly.

### Not Just Another Activity

During this time, it would be very easy for the stewardship leaders of the congregation to simply become yet another hand to spin the roll of life just a little faster. Stewardship events that are planned take time. Congregations that have used programs like “Consecrated Stewards” fully understand this. It takes time to plan, communicate and carry out a well thought out plan for leading the congregation in stewardship ministry.



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Before this goes any further, know that this is a critical time for the congregation. In no way should stewardship be avoided because of the hectic schedules of the people in the congregation. Stewardship is a critical ministry that is needed even more when people are feeling the brunt of the spinning of the roll of life! How time is managed speaks to how the steward of time views it. Is the time committed to us by the Lord ours or His? This is a critical faith question. The knee-jerk reaction would claim ownership of the time. How often do people talk about how they are using their time. In the past couple of decades, even the most faithful Christians have begun to guard their daily schedule even more closely than their checkbook! Not all that long ago, members of the congregation would be far more willing to offer sweat equity to a church project or mission. Today, in many congregations, it is easier to get the checks that will pay for someone else to do the work. For many people in the pews, time has become a more valuable possession than money.

## Time Is More Than a Possession

But is it really a possession? Most possessions are things that can be saved, managed and even hoarded. But can we do that with time? Jesus doesn't think so. Addressing the topic of anxiety in Matthew 6 Jesus asks the pointed question: "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" The assumed answer is no one. Time is a commodity entrusted to us by God that we cannot hoard in an ownership mentality. Time will fly away even if we try to save it.

This fleeting nature of time makes it an even greater candidate for stewardship formation. That the Lord has given us time as part of life and life's resources to be managed for His purposes cannot be debated. How we use our time is indeed a matter of our life of faith. A congregational stewardship ministry needs to consider the stewardship of time something to be taught. Our time is the Lord's. How we use that time portrays what

we believe about the Lord. This stewardship starts as a pastoral care issue. Good pastoral stewardship formation begins with the expectation that the Lord's people will be in the Lord's house and at His table weekly. If all time belongs to God, it would follow that a couple of hours each week should be returned to Him so that He may continue to serve us with His grace! This pastoral care continues as daily time is considered for devotion and family prayer. If the people in the pews truly do regard time as more valuable than money, and by extension make it an idol that would stand between God and them, time becomes a critical centerpiece of stewardship education!

## Teaching Time Appreciation

There is another side of this that needs to be considered for stewardship leaders in the congregation. Stewardship needs to be taught and formed in settings that are appreciative of the value of time! If the families in the congregation are strapped for time, laying out a plan for stewardship



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education and formation that demands more of what they sense they don’t have would be just plain wrong. Setting a stewardship program that maximizes time already in place is critical. Yes, pastor, that means you need to preach stewardship from the pulpit, even if they or you don’t want to! The Sunday morning Bible class, Sunday School and Catechism classes need to be places that are used to teach this critical aspect of the Christian life. Stewardship leaders should not be adding hours of meetings and gatherings. It isn’t necessary. What is necessary is that stewardship leaders become better stewards of the teaching and leading time that we already have!

No stewardship leader would argue that the congregation would expect clear and transparent management of the financial stewardship that has been entrusted in the leadership by them. Any poor stewardship would be noticed, addressed and if left unchecked, have lasting consequences. The same is true of the stewardship of time. If time that is asked for and given is seen by the individual Christian stewards as unappreciated, taken for granted or even wasted, this will have lasting impacts for the congregation.

### Respect Time and Resources

Let this serve as a call for congregational stewardship leaders not to be fearful of teaching and leading in the stewardship of time. But this also serves as a call for steward leaders not to pile on more time that many people don’t have to give. Stewardship leaders in the fall and throughout the year should be cognizant of the time aspect of what

they are planning for stewardship in the congregation. Ask the question: “Is the time we are asking the members of the congregation to give in connection with this program, or activity or study, good stewardship of this very valuable, fleeting resource which the Lord has provided?”

Time will not slow down. We are moving closer and closer to the end of it. This, too, is a call for stewardship leaders to become more aware of teaching the stewardship of time in a faithful manner all year long. With this call comes the great confidence that the Lord we serve is the master of time. He will use time in His way and for His purposes, no matter where we happen to be on the roll at the time!

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