

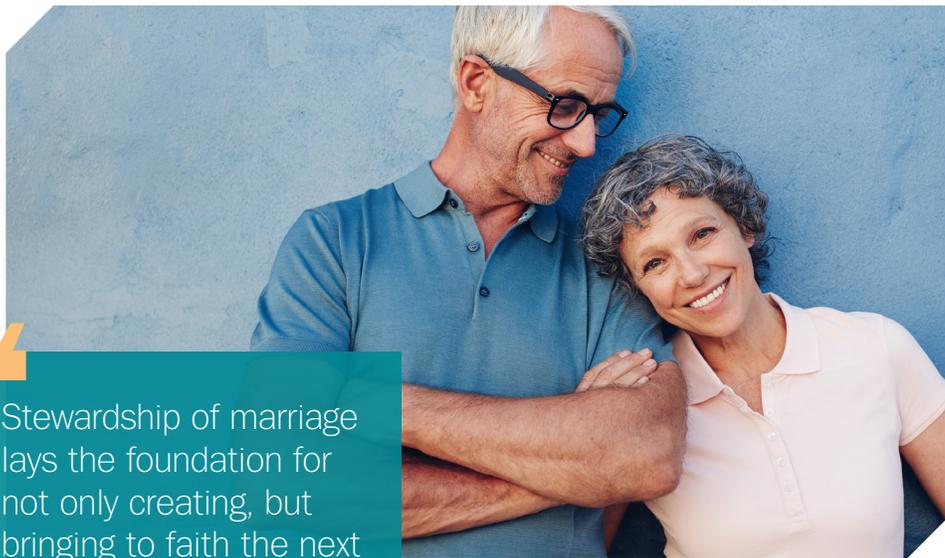
StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

lcms.org/stewardship



Stewardship of Marriage



Stewardship of marriage lays the foundation for not only creating, but bringing to faith the next generation of believers.

At first glance, one may question why a monthly entry regarding stewardship would even reference marriage. What does stewardship have to do with marriage?

This question finds its genesis in a far too narrow definition of stewardship. It is shaded by the opinion that stewardship is only about things financial. Stewardship is so much more. In fact, stewardship is not so much about what is done, but rather the identity of the one doing it. This space has routinely stressed the biblical reality that human beings were created for the task of stewardship. This is the identity of the steward. This gives the steward his or her purpose. Church Father Irenaeus captures this identity and purpose when he writes in the book *Against Heresies*, “In the beginning, therefore, did God form Adam, not as if He stood in need of man, but

that He might have someone upon whom to confer His benefits.” These benefits are the gifts which the Lord has given us to steward.

It is important that the chronology of the bestowal of God’s gifts is attended to. When one finds the creation of the office of steward in Genesis 1 and 2, currency and finances had not even been considered. The steward was created to be over all of life and life’s resources from the very beginning (GEN. 1:26-28). It is important to see that immediately after the image of God is conferred on the stewards they are given the task of being fruitful and multiplying! Here is where marriage becomes as much a matter for the stewardship committee as it is for the pastors and elders. Marriage is a gift which the Lord has given to humanity to be stewarded!

Since marriage is a gift from God, and every gift from God has been entrusted to man to be stewarded for the sake of the neighbor and the

glory of God, what are the steward leaders in congregations doing to steward marriage?

Marriage is the Foundation

Stewardship of marriage is critically important in the local congregation. Marriage is the base unit of all community. When husbands love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her and a wife submits to her husband as to the Lord, a community is formed. But this is so much more than just a mutually agreed upon social contract established by human will between two people of opposite genders. The relationship between husband and wife as established by the Lord in creation is the key to all the other relationships that exist in the congregation.

Stewardship of marriage lays the foundation for not only creating, but bringing to faith the next generation of believers. It is in the environment of a healthy Christian marriage that the next generation learns what is necessary, not just for their survival but their thriving under the blessing of the Lord. Good stewards of marriage serve as teachers of faith and life. How that teaching in the stewardship of marriage takes shape is also important to recall. Most, if not all, learning that comes in stewardship of marriage is done by example. The next generation learns to walk, talk, work, play and worship from the example of the generation before them. The older generation sets the pattern and the newer follows that example to make it their own.

One of the great challenges that steward leaders have in this area is the fact that so many have a pattern for marriage stewardship that is fatally flawed. The disposability and non-permanent attitude toward marriage

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in society has made its way to the thought process of the families that sit in the pews. To faithfully steward, this requires intent and effort. Clear teaching from the pulpit and weekly access to the Means of Grace are essential. Our Lord’s pattern is what lays the foundation of proper stewardship of marriage.

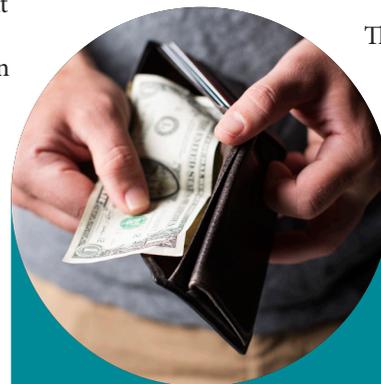
This is no small effort. But it is one that needs to be undertaken if the local congregation is going to be good stewards of the Gospel ministry which has been entrusted to it by the Lord. This effort may include retreats, small groups, marriage mentors and other opportunities that celebrate and model good stewardship of marriage. The health of the congregation is inextricably tied to the health of the families that the Lord has assembled around Word and Sacrament ministry in each location.

When the current generation of marriages have solid pattern to follow, the future generation has something from which to learn. When the pattern being set for teaching the next generation is flawed, what is modeled and then passed on to the next generation will also be flawed. The current generation cannot model or pass on what it does not have. When marriage is not intentionally stewarded in a local congregation, any other stewards of the Gospel becomes that much more difficult.

Finance and the Stewardship of Marriage

At this point, it is safe for the steward to consider things financial for a moment. Without a doubt, financial stewardship, or lack thereof, is the leading indicator of marital dissatisfaction and cause for marriage failure. Depending on the source one reads, 50–75% of households in the United States are living paycheck-to-paycheck or worse. This puts a devastating amount of pressure on marriages. One of the best ways for the steward leaders in the congregation to begin stewarding marriages in the congregation is to aggressively put forward regular opportunities for study on the matter of financial responsibility. The clearest example

of this would be Dave Ramsey’s *Financial Peace University*. It gives an overview on the challenging issue of debt, generosity and legacy giving. This is a necessary piece of the congregational stewardship of marriage in a congregation. There are also other tools and resources that are available in this matter. Compass has a resource entitled *Money and Marriage God’s Way*. These are just two of the potential resources that are available to the local congregation. Steward leaders might consider pressing their pastor to make resources like these part of pre-marriage planning for new couples as well as a financial stewardship recovery program for married couples. Removing as many financial barriers to marriage as possible is one of the best ways to steward marriage.



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There are those who have issue with some of the things Mr. Ramsey has to say in FPU. Since Ramsey is not a confessional Lutheran, there may be some comments that are cringe-worthy. To assist in this, LCMS Office of National Mission has prepared a resource that previews and reviews FPU as congregations consider its use. This is available from lcms.org/stewardship for the low, low cost of FREE! This vehicle is designed for

those who would utilize FPU in the local congregation. It highlights where FPU hits the nail on the head and addresses where it misses the mark theologically. With the tweaks set in place, FPU can be a great tool in the local congregation’s stewardship of marriage!

Marriage is foundational in a congregation. Good stewardship of marriage enables a congregation to be faithful stewards of the Gospel. When Christian marriages are intentionally fed and nourished with Word and Sacrament ministry, they become the seedbed for future stewards. A community formed by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel as a family of faith is fertile ground which sprouts with the necessary support in both financial and human capital for ministry. This generational stewardship of the Gospel in general and marriage in particular is critical in this world that congregations are called to serve.