

Your Stewardship Toolkit for August 2019!

This month's theme: ***Deceived by 'the lie of more!'***

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Check out my blog: www.thestewardshipguy.com!

Good, thoughtful, consistent communication, education and action can help your congregation develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity. This kit can help get you there!

The resources of this kit are most effective when used to support a monthly emphasis about a different aspect of stewardship. You could plan bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series and other activities.

Here's what you'll find below:

-Stewardship Snippets: Put a "Stewardship Snippet" every week in your Sunday bulletin! It's a quote from the week's Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection. Just cut and paste!

-Newsletter Article: Publish something in your newsletter every month on stewardship and faith, or post it on your website. Keep your people thinking about stewardship. Just cut and paste!

-Links to Resources: You'll find links to resources on the Web:

- The "think it" resource – Something thoughtful and insightful to get your mind turning and your soul fired up. Share it with your leadership, or use it for a temple talk.
- The "teach it" resource – Your folks ought to prayerfully and faithfully wrestle with some of stewardship's biblical, theological and discipleship issues.
- The "do it" resource – Talk, as they say, is cheap, so put your stewardship efforts into action.
- The "preach it" resource – Check out the weekly Lectionary Reflection written by Lower Susquehanna Synod pastor and synod staff person Sharron Blezard.

-General Resource Websites: – These are places you can go for great ideas!

Stewardship Snippets

Copy and paste into your bulletin!

Source: Rob Blezard.

Stewardship Snippet

August 4, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 18, Proper 13, Year C)

Ecclesiastes 2:22-23 – What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

"The lie of more" – that more wealth or possessions will bring us happiness – is often the culprit whispering in our ears to work a little longer, a little harder, and ever more efficiently. Ecclesiastes made this teaching clear almost a thousand years before Jesus taught the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21).

Stewardship Snippet

August 11, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 19, Proper 14, Year C)

Luke 12:34 – “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Jesus continues his teaching about greed, resource management, and abundance by telling the crowd to sell their possessions and give alms. He reminds them that their treasure is the home for their hearts. Where is your heart's home? Have you placed your trust God's radical abundance?

Stewardship Snippet

August 18, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 20, Proper 15, Year C)

Hebrews 12:1 – Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

The insatiable desire for more clouds our vision and impedes faithful and fruitful living. Who has modeled faithful resource management in your life? May the witness of others provide hope and encouragement for you to “stay the course” and say NO to “the lie of more.”

Stewardship Snippet

August 25, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 21, Proper 16, Year C)

Luke 13:12 – When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.”

We don't know the exact diagnosis of the crippled woman, yet we know Jesus heals her and sets her free. Jesus desires to free us from all our dis-eases: crippling debt, misplaced priorities, mass consumerism, and all the related disordering of our lives caused by believing “the lie of more.” Are you ready and willing to be healed?

Newsletter article

Select the one below, or from the [Toolkit Newsletter Article Archive](#). Reprint permission is granted for local congregational use. Just copy and paste into your newsletter! Please include the copyright notice. Other uses please inquire: rblezard@lss-elca.org.

AUGUST 2019

Deceived by ‘the lie of more’

And Jesus said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’ -Luke 12:15

“The Andersons” looked uncomfortable as they explained why they couldn’t give more.

“We’d like to,” Mrs. Anderson said, “but we’re getting *killed* with bills.” Mr. Anderson added, “We barely make ends meet.”

Swimming with stagnant wages against a tide of rising costs, millions of working families struggle to find even enough, but the Andersons’ plight is different. They are blessed with excellent jobs and generous incomes. Sadly, they fell prey to “the lie of *more*” that drives our consumer culture.

“The lie of *more*” deceives us into thinking that true happiness, true peace, true contentment is within our grasp – if we only have a little “more.” So we grasp for more stuff, more wealth, more experiences. We often end up not only drowning in debt, but also less happy, less peaceful and less content.

People of all incomes can become ensnared in “the lie of *more*.” In its trap we squander our abundance for scarcity. Instead of living in the freedom and joy that Jesus spoke about in John 10:10, we live in the bondage of debt and stress.

Here are some ways to free yourself from “the lie of *more*”:

- Pray regularly over your finances, thanking God for your income (whatever it is) and asking for wisdom and strength to live within your means.
- Use a household budgeting tool or work with a friend who is good with numbers to come up with a plan to immediately match your income with your bills.
- Develop a longer-term strategy to pay off credit cards.
- Pray over every expenditure: Is this a *necessity* or a *want*? Will this *really* bring me happiness? Does this fit into my budget strategy?
- Work towards a faith plan for your income, such as 10-10-80: Give away 10 percent, save 10 percent and live on 80 percent.
- Explore “financial literacy.” Perhaps you could encourage your congregation to sponsor classes!
- As you started with prayer, continue to pray regularly over your finances.

No matter what our income, our lives are fuller and richer when we confront “the lie of *more*” and focus on the sources of true happiness: Our loving relationship with God and neighbor.

--Rob Blezard

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Pastor Blezard serves as an assistant to the bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod and works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org. He blogs at www.thestewardshipguy.com.

Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Affluenza](#) – This classic 1998 PBS program popularized the term “Affluenza” to describe the negative effects of overconsumption on Americans. It occurs when our insatiable desire for more gives us materially full but spiritually empty lives. The show helped push the “simple living” movement.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2m3ZUeAIA>)

The “teach it” resource

[Affluenza Study Guide](#) – Have your class or group watch the film, above, and then explore using PBS’ study tools. On this site you’ll find a range of fun and interesting resources including a diagnostic test to see if you have Affluenza. End the session by discussing how our faith equips us to avoid Affluenza.

(<https://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/map/map.html>)

The “do it” resource

[Five Steps Towards a Simpler Life](#) – Here is a gem from Franciscan Media, the publishing ministry of the Franciscan Order. Using the example and teachings of Pope Francis (a Franciscan) as a starting point, the article goes on to explore the deeper theological and social implications of simplicity. It ends with suggested steps that both challenge and inspire.

(<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/5-steps-toward-a-simple-life/>)

The “preach it” resource

[Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection](#). Sharron Bleazard, Lower Susquehanna Synod assistant to the bishop and pastor, looks at stewardship implications in the week's Revised Common Lectionary lessons.

(www.stewardshipoflife.org)

General Stewardship Resource Websites

[Stewardship of Life Institute](#)— Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources in areas of congregational and personal stewardship. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

[ELCA Stewardship Resources](#)— Our denomination's deep well of materials. (elca.org/stewardship)

[Center for Steward Leadership](#) — Luther Seminary's excellent website. (www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/)

[The ELCA Foundation](#) a ministry of our denomination. (www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation)

[Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship](#) — Select free or low-cost resources.

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