

Lesson Four: The Practice of Stewardship - "Lifestyle Stewardship™" by Generis
For May 14, 2017 First Baptist, Lewisville, TX
(All Scripture references are New International Version unless otherwise stated.)

1. The first step toward Lifestyle Stewardship

Write the following statement on several index cards: The easiest areas to judge others are in how they raise their children and how they spend their money! As class members arrive, group them into small groups and provide each group a copy of the statement. Instruct them to discuss the statement and to decide if they agree or disagree with the statement. After several minutes, call for responses.

Ask: Why is it easy to become opinionated about how others spend their money or raise their children?

Say: This session brings the four-week study to a conclusion. Briefly review the main points of each previous section. Explain that this session will allow class members to hear several stories about people who have made a choice in their lives to become lifestyle stewards. Assure the class that no one's lifestyle is being judged. Read the following old adage: There is so much wrong with the best of us, And so much right with the worst of us, It hardly behooves any of us To talk about the rest of us! According to the book *Money, Sex, & Power*, those who own a car are among the world's upper class and those who own a home are wealthier than ninety-five percent of all the people on this planet.

Ask: Is this a surprising discovery to you? How do we determine wealth? Why do we as individuals not feel wealthy?

2. We Live as we Choose

State that most of us live as we choose.

Ask for volunteers to share accounts of extreme measures to which they have gone to purchase something they really wanted. Have a story of your own prepared. If possible use humor to create a more open atmosphere. Emphasize we can become extremely creative in finding ways to finance something we really want.

Read the two examples of lifestyle choices about spending money located in "We Live as We Choose" in the student material.

Ask: Is it possible to use the same determination in finding money to give to God that we use in finding ways to finance something we want? Why? State that there are three steps involved in Lifestyle Stewardship. On the whiteboard, write these steps:

1. Reassessing Lifestyle
2. Reordering Priorities
3. Reallocating Resources

Divide class members into three groups. Assign a step to each group and instruct them to search the student material to find an explanation of their assigned step. Encourage each group to present specific actions that can be taken to complete each step. After several minutes, ask for responses from each group. List the specific actions beside the coordinating step on the whiteboard. Ask: Does this seem to be a reasonable approach? What additional steps would be helpful?

3. Lifestyle Stewardship in Action

In the student material, there are three examples of people who were willing to follow these steps. Assign each of the three groups JOHN, WINSTON, or SUE. Instruct each group to locate the story about their assigned person in the student material and determine how each demonstrates Lifestyle Stewardship.

Call for a volunteer from each group to briefly retell each story.

Ask: What similarities exist between their stories? Did their increased giving to church affect their bank accounts? What did their increased giving cost them? How do you “feel” about what they did?

Draw a line on the whiteboard below the steps for Lifestyle Stewardship.™

Ask: Based on our study, what is your definition of Lifestyle Stewardship? List responses on the whiteboard

4. A Common Practice: Emphasize

The challenge of Lifestyle Stewardship is to do for Christ what we often do for ourselves - to approach giving to Him with the same enthusiasm and creativity that we approach giving to ourselves.

Ask: Is this a valid suggestion? Does this seem to be a practical possibility?

5. The Perfect Model of Lifestyle Stewardship

Christ provides the perfect model of Lifestyle Stewardship. Using information in the student material, present Christ's example to class members. Assign the five scripture passages to volunteers. Call on each volunteer to read their assigned passage before you share the example of Christ found in that passage. Follow this procedure until all five examples of Christ's stewardship have been presented. Ask: How does Jesus demonstrate the Perfect Example of Lifestyle Stewardship?

Distribute a copy of the following Meditation Moments to each class member or read it aloud and encourage them to respond silently to each question.

Meditation Moments:

1. Have I been guilty of minimizing my wealth?
2. Have I diverted more and more funds to my lifestyle for wrong reasons?
3. Do my expenditures accurately reflect the values and priorities of my heart?
4. Have I ever truly searched for ways to give more to Christ?
5. Am I as generous with God as I am with myself?
6. Have I ever adjusted my lifestyle for the sole purpose of giving more to God?
7. Do I find in my heart an excitement and enthusiasm for giving to God?

Read the following prayer in closing:

Heavenly Father, many times I have felt "poor" in contrast to the wealth You have entrusted to me. Open my eyes to the true riches, material and spiritual, that are mine. Increase my awareness of the intimate relationship between my heart and my treasure. Help me to be honest with myself and with

You. Inspire my heart and increase my willingness to search the nooks and crannies of my lifestyle to give more to You. Open my eyes, my ears, and my mind to the opportunities for increased giving to Your Work. Especially, Lord, open my heart, for where there is no willingness, ability to give has no significance. Thank You for the perfect and faithful stewardship of Your Son, Jesus. Without the sacrifice of His lifestyle, and life, I would truly be destitute and impoverished. Teach and lead me to follow Jesus' example of the "Faithful Steward." Amen.