

**STEWARDSHIP  
BIBLE  
STUDIES**

## BIBLE STUDY

### *2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 7*

*“We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints—and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us . . . . Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.”*

In urging the early Christians at Corinth toward more generous giving, Paul cites as a model a collection among the churches of Macedonia.

1. How does Paul describe the circumstances surrounding the Macedonian collection?
2. According to Paul, what two factors inspired the Macedonians’ “wealth of generosity”? Discuss the apparent contrast between the two factors.
3. Relate Paul’s example of the Macedonians’ “extreme poverty” to Jesus’ example of the widow’s mite.
4. Beyond their monetary contributions, Paul reports that the Macedonians “gave themselves.” How does he describe their giving priorities? How does this order of priorities inform our giving?

## BIBLE STUDY

### *Genesis 1:26-31a*

*Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good.*

1. What does it mean to you to be created in God's image?
2. What does it mean to you to be given "dominion" over God's creation?
3. What does being created in God's image suggest about how we are to exercise dominion over God's creation? What does it suggest about how we are to relate to other people? other living creatures? our self? the material things of life? our environment?
4. What does this have to do with stewardship?

## BIBLE STUDY

### *Luke 6:27-38*

*“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.*”

*“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*”

*“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”*

In the ethical portion of the Sermon on the Plain from Luke’s Gospel, Jesus sets forth the principles by which all of his disciples—both present and in ages to come—are to live. Identify each ethical principle and relate it to your life as a Christian steward.

## BIBLE STUDY

### *Luke 10:25-37*

*Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."*

*But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

1. What do the actions of the principals in the parable indicate about their approach to possessions?
  - A. Robbers
  - B. Priest and Levite
  - C. Samaritan
2. How does the parable answer the lawyer's question, "And who is my neighbor?"
3. What is the stewardship message of the parable?

# BIBLE STUDY

## *Luke 12:13-21*

*Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he 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." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."*

1. How do you react to abundance in life?
2. In what ways do you "pull down [your] barns and build larger ones"?
3. What was about to happen to the rich fool in Jesus' parable? How would it affect his prior plans?
4. What do you think Jesus meant by being "rich toward God"?
5. Does your understanding of the parable suggest any changes in your life?

# BIBLE STUDY

## *Luke 16:1-13*

*Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."*

1. Most of us live in two kingdoms: the earthly kingdom in which we serve our purposes, and the spiritual kingdom in which we serve God's purposes.
  - a. In what ways do you serve your purposes in your earthly kingdom?
  - b. In what ways do you serve God's purposes in your spiritual kingdom?
2. How do you experience what Jesus characterizes as the impossibility of serving two masters?
3. What could you do to reduce or eliminate conflicts between your two kingdoms?

# BIBLE STUDY

## *Luke 19:29-35a*

*When [Jesus] had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus . . .*

In the agrarian economy of first-century Palestine, working animals were valuable assets to survival.

1. How do you imagine the owners of the colt may have responded to the disciples' explanation for taking their property?
2. How would you respond to the same explanation, if it were your property that was being taken?
3. How do you feel about the call to release what you have to greater purpose, because "the Lord needs it"?
4. How does this teaching relate to the stewardship of our possessions?

# BIBLE STUDY

## *Luke 21:1-4*

*He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."*

1. Being a good steward is fundamentally a matter of the heart and soul. What does their respective giving say about the heart and soul of the poor widow and the rich people?
2. In what way are the amounts of the gifts in the parable important to Jesus' point?
3. What do the respective levels of giving indicate about how the widow and the rich people view the future?
4. When you give, do you feel a sense of loss or gain? What do you feel you are losing or gaining?
5. Is your giving more like that of the widow or that of the rich people? What considerations determine your level of giving?

# BIBLE STUDY

## *Malachi 3:10*

*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.*

1. According to Hebrew law of the mid-5th century B.C.E., what was the tithe and how was it measured?
2. Into what “storehouse” were the people to bring their tithes to the Lord of hosts? How might we interpret the metaphor of storehouse today?
3. What is the challenge of the Lord of hosts articulated by the prophet? How might we interpret this challenge today?



## BIBLE STUDY

### *Matthew 6:1-4*

*“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

*“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

1. According to Jesus’ teaching, what will be the result of our attempts to draw attention to our piety?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when he said that the hypocrites had already received their reward?
3. By admonishing that the left hand should not know what the right hand is doing, Jesus emphasizes the importance of secrecy in charitable giving. Why do you think this is so important?
4. How does charitable giving in modern society reflect this teaching? How does your charitable giving reflect this teaching?



# BIBLE STUDY

## *Matthew 6:25-34*

*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

1. What is the lesson that underlies all of the illustrations in this teaching?
2. How do your life decisions reflect this lesson in each area illustrated by Jesus?
3. If we “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” what does Jesus say will be the result? Do you believe this? How do your actions reflect your belief or disbelief?

# BIBLE STUDY

## *Psalm 49*

- 1 *Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world,*
- 2 *both low and high, rich and poor together.*
- 3 *My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.*
- 4 *I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will solve my riddle to the music of the harp.*
- 5 *Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me,*
- 6 *those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches?*
- 7 *Truly, no ransom avails for one's life, there is no price one can give to God for it.*
- 8 *For the ransom of life is costly, and can never suffice,*
- 9 *that one should live on forever and never see the grave.*
- 10 *When we look at the wise, they die; fool and dolt perish together and leave their*  
*wealth to others.*
- 11 *Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they*  
*named lands their own.*
- 12 *Mortals cannot abide in their pomp; they are like the animals that perish.*
- 13 *Such is the fate of the foolhardy, the end of those who are pleased with their lot.*
- 14 *Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave*  
*they descend, and their form shall waste away; Sheol shall be their home.*
- 15 *But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.*
- 16 *Do not be afraid when some become rich, when the wealth of their houses increases.*
- 17 *For when they die they will carry nothing away; their wealth will not go down after them.*
- 18 *Though in their lifetime they count themselves happy—for you are praised when you*  
*do well for yourself—*
- 19 *they will go to the company of their ancestors, who will never again see the light.*
- 20 *Mortals cannot abide in their pomp; they are like the animals that perish.*

Why does the poet of this Wisdom psalm address his teaching to those of “low and high” birth and to “rich and poor together”?

Why do you think the psalmist expresses in vv. 5 and 6 fear of the wealthy? How does he answer the concern in vv. 16 and 17?

How do vv. 10-14 obliterate the distinctions of v. 2?

According to the poet, what happens to the wealth that some see as a ransom of life?

What role does God play in this teaching? Who is God's counterpart in v. 14? What role does God's counterpart play?

What does this psalm say about what we should value?