



FOUNDATIONS  
of FAITH  
Bible Study

**Part 3 - Stewards**

God blesses you so that you can be a blessing to others.



# Introduction to the Foundations Bible Study

The Foundations of Faith Bible study walks through key Scripture passages that explain the foundational question of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The intent is to answer this important question in a way that gets people engaging first hand with the Bible so they can understand the beliefs and practices that flow from it.

Foundations encourage people to explore the Bible in simple, honest, and engaging manner. You don't need prior knowledge or firm beliefs to participate—just a willingness to explore, ask honest questions, and consider what you encounter. At the same time these are not just beginner steps—they are lifelong rhythms. The most mature followers of Jesus don't move beyond them; they return to them again and again, going deeper over time.

Foundations has six parts that are arranged based on six identities of a Christian as a: Worshipper, Follower, Steward, Family Member, Helper and Witness. Each part consists of multiple Bible readings that develop and explain that identity, and each lesson focuses on one passage so that passage can be thoroughly understood before building on it.

The Foundations study will provide some key components for your journey:

- **The Scripture passage.** This is the passage the lesson will focus on and we recommend reading it a few times. Most Bibles have a table of contents at the beginning in which you can find the books of the Old and New Testament. The first number is the chapter and the second number after the colon is the verse number.
- **Guide to the Word.** This provides background and insight into the Scripture passage to help uncover its meaning and significance. Questions are also provided to help guide your understanding of the passage and important details.
- **Guide to Response.** Offers thoughtful prompts to reflect on how the passage speaks into real life—beliefs, decisions, relationships, and priorities of today.
- **Guide to the Lesson.** This equips group facilitators with practical suggestions for leading discussions, fostering openness, and navigating common challenges.
- **Discovery Group Questions.** These questions are part of our Discovery Bible Studies and are good questions to work through for each passage.

We encourage people to go through the Foundations study with other believers and a group leader so they can learn from others and experience Christian community. Many people will begin the course on their own and independent of a group. If you start on your own we would love to know and support you and would be glad to connect you with a group at any point.

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## Overview for Journey 3: Stewards

**Mantra:** God blesses you so that you can be a blessing to others.

**Key Passage:** “ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

**Beginning Journey Questions:** Answer questions 1-4 below at the beginning of the journey, and review your answers at the end and answer number 5.

1. What does it mean to be a steward of God?

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2. What do you have that you should steward for God?

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3. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate yourself as a steward?

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4. What do you hope to learn in this journey?

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5. After completing this journey, what stood out to you the most in this journey?

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### Key Points of Journey

- God blesses each person with time, talents, and treasures that they are to use for the advancement of his kingdom.
- The church as the gathering of believers is the key place of service and development of a believer’s gifts.

# Lesson 1: Genesis 12:1-9 - Blessed to Be a Blessing

## A. Guide to the Word

Genesis 12 marks a major turning point in the story of the Bible. After humanity's rebellion against God in Genesis 3, sin, judgment, and death spread throughout the world. Yet God did not abandon his creation. Instead, he began his plan to redeem it. This is known as **redemptive history**, and it is the story of God restoring all that was lost in the fall. God does this by calling a man named Abram, who will become the forefather of the nation of Israel and, ultimately, the ancestor of Jesus Christ. Through Abram, God will bring salvation and blessing to the nations.

God calls Abram to leave everything familiar—his country, his people, and his father's household—and follow him to a land that he will reveal (Gen. 12:1). This was a remarkable act of faith. Abram is asked to surrender security and certainty in order to trust God's promises. Yet God does not simply call Abram away from something; he calls him to something greater.

God promises to bless Abram in extraordinary ways. He will make him into a great nation, give him a great name (reputation and character), and protect him from those who oppose him. But these promises are not merely for Abram's benefit. God intends for Abram to become a channel through which His blessing flows to others. The climax of the promise is found in verse 3: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

This promise reaches far beyond Abram's lifetime. Through his descendants would come the people of Israel, and through Israel would come Jesus, the Savior of the world. God's plan has always been to bring blessing, redemption, and restoration to people from every nation.

For this reason, Abram provides an important picture of stewardship. God blesses His people, not so they can hoard His gifts, but so they can share them. The blessings of God are entrusted to His people so they might become conduits of His grace. Time, resources, opportunities, abilities, and even the message of the gospel are gifts to be stewarded for the good of others and the glory of God. Faithful stewards recognize that they are not owners of God's blessings but managers of them, entrusted with the privilege of passing them on.

## B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What was the state of Abram's family before God spoke (chapter 11)?

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2. How is God going to bless Abram? What will God do to those who oppose him?

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3. What did Abram do after God made this promise to him (v4)?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. God's people rest in him to provide for, defend, and bless them.
2. We have been blessed by God so that we might bless others.
3. Receiving the promises of God will require great sacrifice.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. What ways has God blessed you that you might need to consider in how to bless others?

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2. Do you view the blessings God has given to you as things to be preserved and protected or given to others?

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3. In what ways do you need to trust God's promises and be faithful to the calling he has given to you?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

Abram is a forefather of the faith and what God does in Abram will be true of all his descendants who come after him. As we think about the blessings we have, we need to

see that God does not bless us so that we can hoard the blessings, but so that we can be a blessing to others. This is a key piece of our identity as followers of God. God says he will bless us, and he has blessed us (Eph 1:3). We need to trust him to take care of all our needs, and even our enemies. We focus on him and seek to be faithful to him with what he has given to us.

People often fail to steward God's blessings because they fear it will not be sufficient. Throughout the Bible, God promises to take care of the needs of his people. He blesses them, but God also calls people to great sacrifice that will challenge their trust in him. Their challenge will be to see that God is all they need.

In this introductory lesson you might ask people to share key ways they currently think about their possessions, finances, treasures, etc. What are the most influential ideas and people on how they think through these? How does the Bible challenge them, and how is the biblical view of these enticing?

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**What should you obey?** What does this teach about the life God wants us to live? How does it challenge, guide, or inform you? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## **Lesson 2: Matthew 25:14-30 - Parable of the Talents**

### **A. Guide to the Word**

This parable of the talents occurs in a much larger discussion within the book of Matthew about the kingdom of God and how people are to wait for it. This passage focuses on God's servants and how they are to employ what God has given to them for his purposes. God entrusts every servant with talents, and they must prove faithful with them.

In this passage a master entrusts his servants with various talents. A talent was a measurement of weight, and here it indicates an amount of money. Each servant is entrusted with a different amount, and each must put the money to work for the master's interests.

Each servant receives a gift. None is without, but each is different. God does not give the same amount of gifts to everyone. One receives five talents and earns five more. Another has two talents and earns two more. With each of these the master is pleased that they have increased what was entrusted to them. They are not accountable to earn what the other has, but simply to be faithful with the measure given to them. Their accommodation is seen in "well done, good and faithful servant." This is the goal every person should have with what has been given to them, to hear the Lord speak approvingly of how they have spent their life.

The last servant is entrusted with one talent, and he does nothing with it. The master calls this servant lazy and wicked. These strong words highlight the significant and the abysmal failure of not being faithful to God with the gifts he has given to us. It is a moral failure not to use God's gifts for his purpose.

This passage teaches how to steward money but also everything a person has. Talent was once a measurement of weight, but with the popular usage of this parable, talent began to be used for a broader range of giftings. A talent is anything God has entrusted to you that you can honor him with: money, abilities, interests, possessions, hobbies, etc. All are to be employed for God's purposes.

Each of the servants was to steward what was given to them. They must prove faithful to do what is pleasing to their master, and we also must do what is pleasing to God. People today often want God to serve their purposes. They want everything to accommodate them and their needs. This passage turns that on its head. It imbues everything with meaning and significance as an opportunity to honor God, but it also means we must prove faithful in everything he entrusts to us.

## **B. Going deeper in the word**

1. What is a talent? How is it used in this parable? How does our use of that word today broaden the application from a strictly monetary application?

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2. How much was given to the different servants? What did they need to do with the talent entrusted to them?

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3. Why did the third servant fail?

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## **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Everything we have is from God and ought to be used for him.
2. A steward's goal is not to get more stuff, but to hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."
3. Sin is the key reason people do not use their gifts in service of God's kingdom.

## **D. Going deeper in Obeying**

1. What talents has God entrusted to you?

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2. How are you using this talent for the kingdom of God? How are you using it to serve the church of God?

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3. What keeps you from using your talents for God's kingdom?

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## **E. Guide to the lesson**

Building on lesson 1 and God's promise to bless Abram and make him a blessing to others, we see here that God blesses his servants with gifts and calls them to use those talents for his kingdom. They have a responsibility to use their giftings for God's purposes. It is not optional. God also entrusts his servants with different types of "talents" and different measures of talents, and each needs to be faithful with what God has given to them.

This passage provides a deeply impacting message for those who may feel purposeless or that nothing they do really matters. God gives many others gifts that his people need to prove themselves faithful. This can be money and possessions but can also be our skills, the work we do, hobbies, and more. This thinking can open up a vista of opportunities to honor God and do work of eternal significance.

Ask people to list ten ways God has blessed them and given them different talents. This brainstorm can get people thinking more broadly about how God has been gracious to them and how they need to serve others. Also ask them to highlight the areas they are most talented in or most interested in developing. Then ask how they might use these in service to God.

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**What should you obey?** What does this teach about the life God wants us to live? How does it challenge, guide, or inform you? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## Lesson 2: Mark 10:17-31 - The Rich Man

### A. Guide to the Word

As we look at being a faithful steward of God, there are many positive and instructive examples, but in this passage we see a negative example. A rich young man has so much, and yet is unwilling to part with his possessions to serve God. In this Jesus once again turns the values of the world upside down and gives a challenging teaching. Those who are rich in this age may come to nothing if they don't heed his warning.

Jesus teaches this point in an encounter with a young rich man who is asking what it takes to gain eternal life. Jesus tells him to obey the commandments. The man replies that he has kept all of them perfectly for all of his life, but it will soon become apparent his assessment is foolish. He has not kept even the first commandment. He has other gods that are ruling his life.

Jesus tests the sincerity of his initial answer by telling him to sell all he has and give it to the poor. The young man is unable to do this. He cannot part with his riches. His riches own him. He is not willing to give them to God to store up treasures in heaven. The man goes away from Jesus sad. He has no hope of eternal life. His temporal kingdom is more important than God's eternal kingdom. He departs with sadness, he knows too much of God to be without him, but his possessions are too important to change anything.

Jesus uses this to tell his disciples how extremely hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Rich people are often rich because money is their hope and god. Jesus calls them to break their idols in order to serve him and his kingdom. Those who are first in this world will be last in the one to come. People must steward the things God gives to them and use them for the life to come. Many will lose their souls because they are not willing to serve God. Jesus's disciples have made the wise choice to leave all behind for his sake, and Jesus promises they will be rewarded for it. Nothing sacrificed for Jesus will be missed or forgotten.

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. Looking at the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21), what commands did the man keep? Which did he not keep?

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2. Why does the man go away sad?

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3. What is the return on investment that Jesus promises to those who leave things behind for the sake of the gospel?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. The kingdom of God is worth losing everything one has in order to gain.
2. Many people are owned by their possessions and will be left without God.
3. Anything we have that we cannot let go of for God is a hindrance to our service of God.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. In what ways are you like the rich young ruler in not wanting to part with worldly possessions in order to serve God more fully?

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2. What is the best investment of your possessions both now and for all of eternity?

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3. What keeps you from serving God (reading the word, going to church, giving to church, helping others, praying with others, serving others, etc)?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

For our wealthy and materialistic society this passage brings a strong challenge. Is our “stuff” more important than God? This negative example of how not to steward our earthly possessions for the kingdom of God is very sobering. The man walks away sad and with his stuff, rather than happy and with Jesus. He refuses to give up his possessions. How many people today are just like this rich young ruler? They have an

awareness of the teachings of the word of God, but they have not left the world behind to truly take hold of the riches of the kingdom. They fail to make time for God and opportunities to serve, and consistently find things to do other than to give up their stuff. Possessions, vacations, prestige are of more importance than obeying Jesus.

As money is a stumbling block to many, this can lead to good discussion and clear action steps on putting Jesus first. You may press on the topic of stewarding talent from the previous lesson and ask what talents God has given to them and if they are holding on to these or truly giving them over to God. Talk about gifts and money and what it looks like to give them to God. You might ask them what their checkbook or bank account says is of most importance to them.

People may have objections to giving things to God. Serving in or giving to churches is a key way we serve the Lord. Many don't like to hear about these and say things like "churches can't be trusted and have done so many wrong things with money." Churches certainly need to focus on being faithful to God, but don't let one person's wrong lead you to doing wrong. Be faithful to God. Consider asking how people can use their positions to serve God's purposes, and ask what their hindrances to that might be.

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**What should you obey?** What does this teach about the life God wants us to live? How does it challenge, guide, or inform you? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## Lesson 3: Matthew 5:1-16 - The Beatitudes

### A. Guide to the Word

Jesus gives his famous teaching on what it means to be blessed, which is known as the beatitudes. He speaks of eight blessings in proverbial style. Jesus is essentially telling them what it is to be blessed, and it is not about acquiring more stuff as most think. He turns the values of the world upside down and shows all people in all situations can experience blessings, and this means all people have blessings to share and steward.

Blessings are often defined in material terms, but the word blessed here means one who is in a state of spiritual and emotional wellbeing. It is as though basking in the approval of God. An important point to notice is that those who are “blessed” are often not those in ideal circumstances. Their blessing is not based on their worldly position or possessions, but what God has done internally. This blessing is present when in mourning, hunger, conflict, persecution or poverty.

The key to their attitude is that they are to know they have treasure in heaven. The possession of this heavenly treasure is what enables them to live so differently. It is not that they have reached a level of material possession that allows them to be blessed. It is their spiritual maturity that allows them to do so no matter their circumstances. They have a joy and blessing the world doesn’t know, and this is what sets them apart as the light of the world.

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. List the blessings that are mentioned. How do these blessings connect to and derive from a relationship with God?

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2. How do these blessings come in spite of disadvantageous circumstances?

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3. How do these blessings connect to being the light of the world? How do people see the light?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. God's work for us changes our attitude about everything.
2. Our goal in life is not to get our own way but to relish in what we have with God.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. Which of the beatitudes do you have the most trouble with? How can you grow in that?

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2. Which ones are you better at? What helps you reflect that attitude?

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3. How does this teaching influence how you pray for blessing?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

Many people talk about and desire God's blessing, and their talk typically tends to be about getting more stuff. The beatitudes show that some of the most blessed people in life do not reside in big homes and mansions. Some of the most blessed people are in humble circumstances. Many people with big homes and incomes have very little blessing. People wear themselves out to acquire "blessings" that simply are not that valuable. Jesus shows us what is truly valuable in life, and it is freeing.

When we experience the grace and mercy of God we want to share it with others. Talk through these various blessings and attitudes and which ones they need more help in. If several people in the group are struggling or need help with one, take a week to study that topic. But notice that growing in these areas is not just a to do list but it is coming to a deeper understanding of God and what he provides.

You might also have people in the group share where they see others in the group excelling. This can be an encouraging time and also help people see how God is at work in each of them. Group time should not always be about what people are not doing. Encourage one another!

A good ice breaker for this lesson might be to have people share about a hard time in life in which they felt God showed them an important lesson they would not have learned apart from the hardship.

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**What should you obey?** What does this teach about the life God wants us to live? How does it challenge, guide, or inform you? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## Lesson 4: Matthew 25:14-30 - The Parable of the Talents

### A. Guide to the Word

Jesus tells this parable as part of his teaching about his return and the final judgment. A master prepares to go on a journey and entrusts his servants with varying amounts of money, called talents. A talent was a measurement of weight and often referred to an amount of money, like a talent of silver. One servant receives five talents, another two, and another one. Each receives according to his ability. The focus of the parable is not on the amount given, but on what each servant does with what has been entrusted to him.

The first two servants immediately put their master's resources to work and produce a return. When the master returns, he commends both servants with the same words: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Though one received more than the other, both are rewarded equally because both were faithful stewards. God does not judge people according to what they have been given compared to others, but according to their faithfulness with what they have received.

The third servant responds differently. Rather than using what was entrusted to him, he buries it in the ground. When confronted, he blames the master's character for his inactivity. He claims to fear the master, yet his actions reveal that he neither trusted nor honored him. The master rebukes him as a "wicked and lazy servant." His problem was not merely poor stewardship but a heart that was disconnected from the master.

This parable reminds us that everything we have belongs to God. Our time, abilities, opportunities, finances, relationships, and spiritual gifts are entrusted to us for a season. We are stewards, not owners of these things. A steward is one entrusted to manage the possessions of another, and that is what we are. One day each person will give an account for how they used what God placed in their care.

Many people fail as stewards not because they lack resources, but because they are indifferent, fearful, distracted, or just plain lazy. They waste what God has entrusted to them rather than using it for *his* purposes. Faithful stewardship requires action. The faithful servants took risks, worked diligently, and sought the interests of their master.

The gospel provides both the motivation and power for stewardship. Jesus is the perfectly faithful Son who accomplished the work his Father gave him to do. Through his death and resurrection, he forgives unfaithful stewards and makes them his servants. We do not steward God's gifts in order to earn his acceptance; we steward them because we have already received His grace. Those who truly know the Master long to hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

## **B. Going Deeper in the Word**

1. What differences do you see between the attitudes and actions of the faithful servants and the wicked and lazy servant?

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2. Why do you think the master rewards the servants based on faithfulness rather than the amount they produced?

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3. What does the third servant's response reveal about his understanding of the master?

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4. How does this parable prepare believers for the return of Christ and the final judgment?

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## **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Everything we have belongs to God, and we are called to faithfully steward it for his glory.
2. Faithful stewardship requires action, diligence, and trust rather than fear, excuses, or laziness.
3. The grace of Jesus motivates believers to use their gifts and opportunities in service to God's kingdom.

## **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. What gifts, opportunities, resources, or responsibilities has God entrusted to you, and how are you currently using them?

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2. In what areas of your life are you tempted to be fearful, passive, or lazy rather than faithful?

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3. If Jesus returned today, where would you most want to hear "Well done, good and faithful servant," and where would you need to repent?
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## **E. Guide to the Lesson**

Many people read this parable and immediately focus on identifying their talents. While that is important, the primary focus of the passage is faithfulness. The issue is not how much a person has received but what they do with what God has entrusted to them. Some people compare themselves to others and become discouraged because they believe they have less ability, fewer opportunities, or fewer resources. Help the group see that the master commends both faithful servants equally. God is not looking for comparison but faithfulness.

The third servant should also be discussed carefully. His problem is deeper than poor performance. Jesus calls him wicked and lazy. He failed to act because he did not truly know or trust his master. Many people today fall into the same trap. They make excuses, delay obedience, or hide what God has given them. Some are paralyzed by fear. Others are distracted by comfort or self-interest. The passage calls people to examine whether they are faithfully serving God or merely making excuses.

Be sure to connect the discussion to the gospel. Left to ourselves, none of us have been perfect stewards. We have all wasted opportunities, neglected responsibilities, and failed to honor God as we should. The good news is that Jesus came to save unfaithful stewards. Through his perfect obedience, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection, he provides forgiveness and restoration. Stewardship is not about earning God's favor but responding to God's grace.

Encourage participants to identify specific gifts, opportunities, relationships, and resources God has entrusted to them. Ask how they might use those things to serve others, strengthen the church, and advance the gospel. Help people leave with one concrete step they can take this week to be a more faithful steward of what God has placed in their care. Participation in church is a key way people use their gifts to serve

others and advance the mission so be sure to spend some time on that. If they are not in a church encourage them to look into it.

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**What should you obey?** What does this teach about the life God wants us to live? How does it challenge, guide, or inform you? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## Lesson 5: Romans 12:1-8 - Living Sacrifices

### A. Guide to the Word

In this passage Paul speaks to the church about the gifts they have and the need to use them to serve others, but even more importantly he speaks about the attitude and way of thinking that should go with those gifts. Believers need to be transformed in their understanding of themselves and the gifts they have. The church is to be different from the world. They are to have humility and sober judgment that are seasoned with grace.

There are many gifts listed in this passage. Some of these gifts are listed in other passages (1 Cor 12, Eph 4), but there are also gifts mentioned elsewhere that are not mentioned here. This means that none of the list of giftings in Scripture are exhaustive. Additionally, some of the gifts mentioned could be broad categories, but even with that believers may find themselves with burdens and interests not mentioned here.

A big part of stewarding gifts is seeing their place in service to the body of Christ and the cause of exalting Jesus. Here the connection of gifts and church is made clear. We are all members of one body (12:5) and use our gifts to serve others in the body. Each person has different gifts, as mentioned in the parable of the talents, and each gift should be used in ways corresponding to its usefulness. It is clear our gifts are to be used to build up the body of Christ– the church.

People often think of their gifts as solely beneficial to themselves. They seldom even think about or consider how others, particularly other believers, may be helped and served by their gifts. This is a key way people need to be renewed in their minds. People should use their gifts to serve the body of Christ, and this is also the key context in which their gifts are used and cultivated for God’s purposes. If you want to figure out what God is calling you to do and what gifts you have, then start serving in the church!

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. In what ways does this teach us to have our understanding of ourselves and our giftings transformed?

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2. How do grace, humility, and service all connect together?

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3. What gifts are needed in the body? What happens to the body if these gifts are absent?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Believers are members of a body (the church) and that body is the primary place of stewarding their gifts.
2. Service is done with love and humility and not out of pride and arrogance.
3. Church membership is a vital part of the Christian life and stewardship.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. What gifts has God given you to serve the body of Christ?

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2. Are you connected to the body of Christ and using your gifts to help it grow?

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3. What gifts and measures of gifting has God given you? What gifts do the others in your group have?

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4. How does pride get expressed in your gifts? How can humility be cultivated?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

Many people will wonder about their gifts and measure of gifting. This can be very hard to determine, especially when people are not connected to the body of Christ. If people want to discover their gifting then the best thing to do is connect to the church

and start serving. Many times your gifts will cause you to see things others don't see or to meet needs in ways unique to your giftings. As you serve in an area, it will become clearer where you can best help strengthen the body and steward your gifts.

Many people today view church as non-essential and unimportant, but the New Testament teaches something very different. Church is essential and vital to the wellbeing and development of a believer. Churches also need each member using their gifts in order for the body to be healthy. If one is going to be a good steward of the gifts they have then they must be a connected member of a local church.

Ask people to share where they are gifted and how they are growing in these gifts. Also ask them how their church is allowing them to use and grow in their gifts. Often those who are not growing are not connected to a church. Encourage them to find a way to connect with a church and to use their gifts in service to God. Consider having people share how their gifts were developed and strengthened by participation in church. This may help spur others on.

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**What should you obey?** What does this teach about the life God wants us to live? How does it challenge, guide, or inform you? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## Lesson 6: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 - Generous Giving

### A. Guide to the Lesson

The grace and gift of giving is talked about in this passage. The gift being stewarded is financial generosity, and it is being made for the flourishing of God's people. Paul is encouraging an offering to be made by the church community of Corinth, and he is using the sacrificial example of a more impoverished church in Macedonia to spur them on. Finances are to be stewarded, and they are a key aspect to prove faithful with because they are an essential way to help and bless others.

Financial giving is to be a weekly part of the gathering of believers (1 Corinthians 16:2). Throughout the Old Testament tithes and offerings were made, and the place of financial giving continues in the New Testament. Second Corinthians 8 builds on the place of financial giving and expounds in detail on the attitude and motivation for it.

These believers gave, not out of their abundance but rather gave sacrificially, and even gave even beyond their ability. They gave even when it hurt. They didn't do it begrudgingly, but rather they were eager and even pleaded for the opportunity to give. It is clear their hearts and minds had been transformed! Their giving was not done out of mere obligation. Paul does not want to command them to give. He wants to provide them the opportunity to be like Jesus, who was rich but for our sake became poor so that we, through his poverty, might become rich (v9). Every believer is called to sacrificial financial stewardship, and it is an opportunity to become more like the Savior. The lives of these believers spoke a powerful message about who they were trusting and who they were living for.

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What were the people to give themselves to first and foremost? How does this affect one's view of money?

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2. What are things that characterize a believer's disposition toward giving financially to the church?

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3. What were the circumstances of the Macedonians and how did that affect their giving?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Believers are to use their finances for furthering the ministry of the gospel.
2. Financial giving is not based on our circumstances but on Jesus giving himself for us.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. What does your use of finances say about giving yourself first and foremost to Jesus?

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2. What helps and what prevents you from being a faithful giver to the church?

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3. How might your giving lead to others knowing Jesus?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

Giving financially to the church is a topic many people do not like to talk about. Pastors shy away because of fear they may be seen as manipulative. Others don't talk to their friends about it because of fear of offending. This great concern and required sensitivity reveals what a sacred idol finances are in our culture. If we are going to honor the Lord with what he has given to us, then financial stewardship is a necessity. Even more, this is an opportunity to be like Jesus. Those who refuse to show what an idol their finances are for them.

Some people may balk at discussing this topic. It can be important to begin not talking about personal practices, but to instead focus on the word. What does this say about giving, about the attitude, about why we give? It may even be worth discussing

why people don't give. Hear their concerns and objections. Talk through these, but even more point them back to the word. How does this passage address your concerns? Would Paul be accepting of your reasoning? Would Jesus?

You might also consider asking who has found joy in giving. Some people have had their lives reordered by Jesus's teaching and they have found peace and joy through sacrificial giving. Remember Jesus didn't come to make us suffer, but rather that we might have life to the full. We experience that fullness by trusting and following him. Give people a chance to share this.

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## **Lesson 8: Malachi 3:1-18 - Robbing God**

### **A. Guide to the Word**

Malachi was a prophet who lived during the fifth century BC, and he preached to God's people after they had returned to their homeland from exile. They had been exiled from their homeland because of their disobedience to God, and sadly, even after their return to their homeland, their hearts were still far from God. In this passage the prophet Malachi looks ahead to the day the Messiah will completely deliver his people and restore their fortunes. He will do this by first sending a messenger ahead to prepare the way, like a king sending servants ahead to tell of his coming. The Lord promises to come again one day and fill the temple with his glory.

The coming of the Lord will be a great day for those who are faithful to him, but Malachi points out that many of God's people are not living as they should. Even though they have returned to their land, their hearts have not returned to God. To these God will draw near for judgment (3:5). The Lord is calling out their unfaithfulness and giving a strong rebuke in order to save them when he comes.

God calls his people to come back to him, and his people ask how they have gone astray. He says, they have strayed in that they are now robbing God! How are they robbing him is asked, to which God responds, "In tithes and offerings" (3:8). This sobering critique gets at the heart of his people's problem and the significance of their disobedience. They are told to bring the "full tithe into the storehouse" (3:10).

Tithing is the practice of giving ten percent of your income to the Lord (Lev 27:30, Genesis 14). The tithe was brought to the storehouse which is a reference for the temple of God. As the temple was the center of prayer and teaching the word, it played a key role in the spiritual health of God's people. The offering sustained the ministry and provided for the needs of the priests. The people's giving to the temple had a direct effect on the advancement of the nation, and supporting the temple was to be a priority in their lives.

Malachi addresses their unfaithfulness in tithing to the temple with a strong rebuke, but you must also see God's grace at work in this passage. God cares so much about his people that he keeps calling them back. Most people steer clear of robbers and want to see thievery punished to the utmost, but in this passage God is calling robbers, people who stole from him, to return to him. His arms are wide open for these robbers to leave their sinful ways and come to him. Such people can experience new life and the bountiful and overflowing provision of God. This passage challenges and comforts stewards to see both the sternness and grace of God.

## **B. Going Deeper in the Word**

1. What are some of the things people were doing wrong? How are they robbing God?

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2. Why would tithing to the temple be so important for God's people?

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3. What does God promise to do for the people who trust him?

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## **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. We give because we trust God to provide for our needs.
2. Giving is empowering, and as believers we want to empower God's people, the church, to do what he calls them to do.

## **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. What percentage of your finances do you give to God?

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2. What does this reflect about your commitment to God and trust in him?

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3. How does this passage comfort you for ways you have failed in giving to God?

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## **E. Guide to the Lesson**

A biblical view of stewardship would be incomplete if it did not include a teaching on tithing. Tithing is not the only thing about stewardship, but it is an important part of how believers participate in the mission and purpose of God. Tithing allows the ministry of the word to grow and spread, and that is the greatest motivation for giving.

A further study of tithing can be done by searching on the word and reading various passages. Many will often note that tithing is not commanded in the New Testament. This is true, but there is also clearly a precedent for giving. What is more important than the amount is the attitude. Remember also that the only percentages given in the New Testament are the poor widow, who gave 100% (Luke 21:1-4), and Zacchaeus, who gave 50% of everything he had (Luke 19:8). The principle is clearly there, and many go above and beyond the tithe.

Jesus obviously fulfills the law, and with that he changes everything. Murder, adultery, and the sabbath are all different. It's about the heart. Murder is heightened so that even hating someone is considered murder. With Jesus resting is given greater freedom, but the structure of working six days and resting one continues. This is a helpful way to think about tithing. People are freed from a legalistic understanding of it, but are still called to do it. There may be times they are not able to, and there is grace for that. But that grace should motivate giving. Everything is God's, and we trust him to give what is needed. Even more, we long for others to know Jesus and that stirs us to give to his mission.

Also notice in this passage the call to test God. No where else does God say to test him, but here he tells his people to do that with giving. Some leaders overemphasize this verse, but some don't give it enough attention. Regardless of how others have missed the point of giving, remember the principle that God blesses his people as they faithfully steward their gifts is still true.

## Discovery Group Questions

**What are you thankful for this week and what is stressing you out?**

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Share.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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## Lesson 7: 1 Peter 4:1-11 - Stewards of the Grace of God

### A. Guide to the Word

Peter writes this letter to a church that is suffering persecutions for their faith. They are to arm themselves with the same attitude that Christ had. They are not to live for passions of the flesh, but with passion for the will of God. They were once living as pagan gentiles but God called them out of that and now tells them to live in it no longer. They have wasted enough time in that way of life. Now they are to give themselves wholly to God.

They are to be clear minded, self-controlled and prayerful, and this will transfer over to them using whatever gifts they have received in service to God and others. This has definite echoes of Romans 12. They are to be distinct from the world in how they live and this will be evidenced in how they use their gifts and the purpose for them.

They are exhorted to love others (v8), and this love leads to using gifts the right way. Several gifts are mentioned, and each gift receives a specific challenge for how it should be used. Each person receives a gift and no one is left out. He also says each person should use their gifts in service to others, “faithfully administering the grace of God” (v9). This is amazing to think about. When people use their gifts they are administering not just their gift, but they are actually administering the grace of God. People experience the grace of God through other people using their gifts! This is an incredible privilege and also a great responsibility. When people serve, lead, teach, cook, program a computer, etc., they are honoring God and serving other people, and those they serve experience the grace of God!

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What is the reason given for why these people should no longer live as the pagans do?

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2. What does this passage teach about God giving gifts to his people?

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3. What are the different gifts and how are they to be used?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Everyone called by God is given gifts to use in service to others.
2. When people use their gifts they administer the grace of God to others.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. How do you view opportunities to serve other people?

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2. What can you do to better use and develop your spiritual gifts?

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3. What have you done to help others experience the grace of God?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

A unique contribution of this passage to stewarding our gifts is the idea that when we use our gifts we are administering the grace of God to others. This opens up using gifts not just in service on Sundays but in all parts of life. We can administer God's grace in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, in our families, and yes, certainly, in our churches. Serving Jesus opens up many different ways to give ourselves in service to God's kingdom.

And once again, it needs to be remembered that the context for growing in using our gifts is in the church. This is the place we are renewed in our minds, renewed in how we live, and renewed in our giftings. God's word guides us in how to live for him, and this is just one part of our life as Christians. We cannot develop our gifts outside of developing a Godward attitude in everything. Continue talking about gifts and how we develop those gifts in the church.

## Discovery Group Questions

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**What does God’s Word say to us?** What did you like in the passage? What grabbed your attention and what questions came up? How would you summarize this passage? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Pray.** How does this passage guide you to pray: “sorry,” “thank you,” or “please help”?

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